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Canadian Postsecondary Leaders' Understanding and Promotion of Social Justice and Educational Equity

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Walden University
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Abstract

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MEd, University of British Columbia, 1987

BSN, University of Victoria, 1980

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Community College Leadership

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Abstract

Canadian universities are educating an increasingly diverse student body and have a role in rectifying inequities and educating students to contribute to a democratic and inclusive society, but little is known about how mainstream leaders understand such leadership. The purpose of this study was to examine how mainstream Canadian postsecondary leaders in Canada describe and understand their leadership related to social justice and educational equity. Critical social theory and applied critical leadership theory guided this study. This basic qualitative study using semistructured interviews explored how 11 mainstream postsecondary leaders have understood and promoted social justice and educational equity. Data analysis employed the use of open coding, reflective journaling, and the formation of themes. Participants found social justice and educational equity relevant to their leadership role, connecting the concepts with their values, ideals, experience, and roles. Experiences in their family of formation, formative years, the family of partnership, formal education, and scholarly discipline all contributed to disposition, capacity, and agency to promote social justice and educational equity. The leaders' ability to self-reflect and understand their identity in managing diverse contexts for the promotion of social justice and educational equity was critical. While a positive orientation was evident, a comprehensive unified approach to social justice and educational equity in postsecondary was not. This study may assist in identifying the gaps in postsecondary leaders understanding of social justice and educational equity and may contribute to positive social change by showing potential developmental pathways for postsecondary leadership education programs.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to members of my family who influenced my path and provided support along the way. To my late husband, Clyde Greer Cawley, who believed in me, supported me and provided the nucleus for our family to grow and prosper in his life and in the spirit he provides us in death. To my late parents Edward Joseph Novak and Marie Freund Novak for their belief in me, but most importantly their resilience and determination in teaching me the value of hard work and perseverance. To my oldest daughter Tallah Rose Cawley, a proud First Nations woman, for the vicarious experience of what racism means to individuals and the courage to work toward overcoming significant life challenges. To my twin daughters Kylah Marie Joan Cawley and Brynna Sylvia Keylan Cawley for their emotional and physical support during all those long periods of writing and their senses of humour and pragmatism in pushing me forward and in laugher. To my youngest daughter, Courtenay Laurel Anne Cawley for her support and her discourse as she undertakes her studies allowing me insight into theories and disciplines I did not have an opportunity to study providing insight into this work. To my grandchildren Westley Greer Higgins, Kristin Jacqueline Thurston, Riley Dignard, and Dylan Dignard for the embodiment of hope in a future that is possible. To my fur babies Poppett, Gizzmo, Leo, and Lodi for their support in sitting by my side.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

In recent decades, significant shifts in the Canadian postsecondary environment have resulted in a diverse postsecondary classroom. While the shifts are not unique to Canada, global flows of educational consumers, mobility across borders, and increased attention to indigenous education have resulted in diverse and complex postsecondary environments (Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada [AUCC], 2014; Statistics Canada, 2011). Leaders in Canada's postsecondary institutions are increasingly responsible for leading and managing ethnoculturally diverse populations in their institutions. Additionally, the variables that contribute to diversity are expanding beyond culture, ethnicity, race, and gender to broader inclusivity in the educational landscape (Furman, 2012). The changing environment creates increased discourse on how education meets the needs of new realities with social justice and educational equity at the center of the discussion.

Leaders in education accept the professional responsibility directed toward student outcomes within an increasing accountability framework (Allen, Harper, & Koschoreck, 2017; Armstrong, Tuters, & Carrier, 2013). Leaders are recognized as influential in managing diversity (Carr, Pluim, & Thesee, 2017; Marshall & Lee, 2017; Ryan & Tuters, 2107). While there are studies of educational leaders as early adopters of social justice and educational equity initiatives, there are few studies on how the typical mainstream educational leader interprets and applies social justice and equity in their practice (Marshall & Oliva, 2010; Pantic, 2017; Ryan & Tuters, 2017). Mainstream leaders are typically identified as the majority of leaders within a defined grouping, such

as postsecondary education, representing what is considered normal or conventional within the identified group (Barker, 2001). Of the studies conducted, the vast majority of scholarship exists in kindergarten to Grade 12 (K–12) education, with little research in the postsecondary setting. The purpose of this study was to add to the empirical knowledge and explore how typical leaders in postsecondary institutions in Canada understand social justice and educational equity from the perspective of their leadership practice.

Background

Canada as a nation relies on immigration to build the population. Canada's estimated 2020 population of 37,894,799, increases 0.3% each quarter (Statistics Canada, 2020) and increased by 0.9% from 2017–2018 with 66.75% of the increase from immigration (Statista, 2018). In 2017, four provinces, Ontario, Quebec, Alberta, and British Columbia, received 84.9% of the reported 271,180 immigrants, the vast majority residing in urban areas (Statista, 2018). Increased focus on ensuring equal access to opportunities for indigenous peoples is paramount, due to finding a long history of oppression outlined in the 2015 release of the Truth and Reconciliation Report (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015). In 2016, First Nations or indigenous peoples population of Canada represented 4.9% of the population (Statistics Canada, 2016) with eight out of 10 First Nations or indigenous peoples living in Ontario or one of the western provinces (Statistics Canada, 2011). The National Household Survey (NHS) indicated in the most recently available data that approximately 19.1% of Canada's population identified as a visible minority (Statistics Canada, 2011).

Scholarship on social justice and educational equity are emergent in the K–12 education system in Canada, the United States, and internationally. Within the past 10 years, there has been an increase in research to prioritize issues accompanying diversity, such as marginalization and oppression of identified minority or disadvantaged groups (Ahram, Fergus, & Noguera, 2011; Armstrong et al., 2013; Berkovich, 2014; Breunig, 2019; Theoharis, 2009). In K–12 education, the focus on enhancing understanding occurs within preservice teacher education, curriculum, leadership, and graduate-level programs to prepare leaders for the K–12 educational system.

In contrast to the entrance to teaching and leadership in the K–12 system, entry of new faculty to teach in the postsecondary system is commonly based on discipline expertise, and not necessarily accompanied by educational expertise (Simmons, 2011). Entry into leadership in postsecondary is often not a straight trajectory from faculty to leader and often marked by dissonance, not necessarily accompanied by leadership preparation (Davison, 2012). Social justice and equity work are not a common thread in postsecondary preparation and more usually confined to specific disciplines such as education, criminology, social work, health sciences, and sociology (Hudson, Shapiro, Ebiner, Berenberg, & Bacher, 2017).

Unlike K–12 education preparation, a whole systems approach to social justice and educational equity is noticeably absent in Canadian postsecondary education (Berkovich, 2014, 2017; Bogotch & Shields, 2014; Boske, 2015). It is important to note that the vision and mission of the two systems, while similar, are different in important aspects (Czop, Garza, & Battle, 2010). The K–12 system, aside from private schools, is

designed to operate for the public good with an intent to provide equal access (Winarti, 2018). The postsecondary system, while government-subsidized in many countries, including Canada, largely grants access on a level of merit or the completion of some basic admission standards. While exceptions exist, in postsecondary it is not yet the norm that social justice and educational equity present as an integral outcome of post-secondary education (Battiste, 2013)

Statement of the Problem

Immigration patterns indicate an increasing diversity in the Canadian population, and by extension, the application pool for Canadian postsecondary institutions. While equal access to opportunities does not necessarily guarantee equal outcomes, leaders' critical awareness of forms of oppression, exclusion, and marginality is important to understanding power distributions in an institution (Brooks & Miles, 2006; Diem & Boske, 2012).

Increasing awareness in the K–12 educational sector of social justice and educational equality is gradually influencing both the K–12 and postsecondary systems (Santamaría, 2014; Vogel, 2012; Wang, 2018; Wilson-Strydom, 2014). The postsecondary educational system, while separate from the K–12 system, shares a mutual interest in the K–12 experiences that influence students. Students are quasiconsumers of education, and K–12 changes along with increasing diversity shifts in student awareness can occur, advancing the students' awareness of social justice and educational equality. Students who are graduates of a changing K–12 in Canada may arrive in postsecondary,

expecting equity in access and outcomes (Patton, L., 2015; Picout & Hou, 2011; Wilson-Strydom, 2014).

Different components of the educational sector may adapt at different rates. While postsecondary institutions may not uniformly address social justice and equity issues, universities often collaborate in social justice and equity research through disciplinary and interdisciplinary research (Bogotch & Shields, 2014). In Canada, the site of this study, the postsecondary landscape consists of a variety of institutions. In addition to the traditional university, community colleges offer credentials from the certificate to degree level, institutes that focus on employment-ready programs offer diplomas to degrees, and poly-technical universities offer a range of programs in a university-vocational hybrid model (Statistics Canada, 2017).

Leaders in postsecondary institutions typically experience a career trajectory within a specific institution type, although there may be some migration of leaders amongst institutions (Carnevale & Strohl, 2013). Thus, the background of leaders in postsecondary is usually within a discipline of expertise with much of leadership experience and development occurring on the job. Community college leadership in the United States has fared slightly better with competencies identified for leaders by the American Association of Community College (American Association of Community Colleges [AACC], 2016). In contrast to universities, community college leadership programs exist, developed in-house or by an educational institution (Forthun & Freeman, 2017).

Kisker, Weintraub, and Newell (2016) noted that democratic participation and principles rely on practice in action. Centering social justice and educational equity into a safe space within postsecondary education requires critique and critical dialogue (Bickmore & Parker, 2014; Sears, Peck, & Herriot, 2014). Sears et al. (2014) found that democratic ideals are present in postsecondary institutions' mission statements, but unless there is a considered approach to injustice, actions tend not to occur or to be safe. Scholars studying leadership for social justice have noted that leaders need to understand themselves in relation to inequity, be reflective in their actions, and be able to make connections between actions and changes made through social justice and educational equity (Berkovich, 2017; Boske, 2015; Furman, 2012).

Studies in K–12 and postsecondary leadership often focus on leaders who are early adopters of social justice and inequity principles (Arar, Beycioglu, & Oplatka, 2017; Berkovich, 2014; Carpenter, Bukoski, Berry, & Mitchell, 2017; Gordon & Ronder, 2016; Ryan & Tuters, 2017; Pantic, 2017; Patton, L., 2015; Kob & Gaëtane, 2014). While there are studies on individuals in K–12 leadership preparation programs, I found limited related studies of mainstream leaders in postsecondary settings relative to how they interpret and apply social justice and educational equity. The purpose of this study was to examine how mainstream Canadian postsecondary leaders, not identified as activists for social justice and educational equity, describe and understand their leadership related to knowledge, skills, and abilities and cultural awareness relative to social justice and educational equity.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine how mainstream Canadian postsecondary leaders in Canada describe and understand their leadership related to social justice and educational equity. I employed a basic qualitative study to address this gap.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. How do mainstream postsecondary leaders describe and understand the relevance of social justice and educational equity in their leadership practice?
2. How do mainstream postsecondary leaders describe and understand their leadership in relation to promoting social justice and educational equity in their leadership practice?

Conceptual Framework

I used critical social theory (CST; Habermas, 1970) and applied critical leadership theory (ACLT; Santamaría & Santamaría, 2012) as the framework of this study. CST is based on the notion that social reality is historically composed, generated, and reconstructed consciously and deliberately. I used these frameworks as an attempt to understand, analyze, criticize, and alter social, economic, cultural, technological, and the psychological with phenomena that have features of oppression, domination, exploitation, injustice, and misery (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998). CST is used to assess the development of a more just world through praxis in the reduction of power relationships and was

appropriate for this study because I explored the base understanding and critical awareness of the leader's practice of social justice and educational equity.

ACLT (Santamaría & Santamaría, 2012) as a framework to builds on critical theory and transformational leadership. ACLT, as a framework is useful in examining leadership practices associated with transforming status quo educational practices. Individual identity, critical reflection, and dispositions are all underlying elements of this theory. I used this conceptual framework as a guide to examining leadership practices in action through the formulation of interview questions and data analysis. I discuss CST and ACLT in more depth in Chapter 2.

Nature of the Study

For this study, I used a basic qualitative design to explore mainstream leader's understanding and promotion of social justice and educational equity. Basic qualitative research methodology is appropriate to use when the goal is to understand the perceptions of the individual in understanding a concept (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Qualitative research, and in particular interviewing, is consistent with understanding how mainstream leaders view and promote social justice and educational equity in their leadership practices. I used semistructured interview questions to explore the leaders' understanding of social justice and educational equity about their leadership practice. I used the data gathered from participants to explore mainstream leaders' understanding of social justice and educational equity about their leadership practice and experiences.

Definitions

To prevent misunderstanding of what is meant by select words used in this study, the following definitions are provided:

Cultural intelligence (CQ): is a person's capability to function effectively in situations characterized by cultural diversity (Ang, Van Dyne, & Koh, 2006)

Cultural humility: the capacity to preserve an interpersonal attitude that is other-oriented (or open to the other) about aspects of cultural identity that are most important to the person (Hook, Davis, Owen, Worthington, & Utsey, 2013).

Diversity: differences typically considered along the dimensions of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age, physical abilities, religious, and political and ideological beliefs and values (Volckmann, 2012).

Distributive justice: addressing how a community treats its members in terms of assignment of benefits and burdens according to some standard of fairness (Jackson, 2005).

Equality: the same status, rights, and responsibilities for all the members of a society, group, or family (Fredrickson, 2015).

Equity: Fairness and impartiality toward all concerned based on the principles of evenhanded dealing. Equity implies giving as much advantage, consideration, or latitude to one individual, party, or group as given to others (Fredrickson, 2015).

Interculturalism: supports cross-cultural dialogue across cultures. The concept has arisen in response to multiculturalism, which is seen as separating cultures and

inhibiting inclusion. Recognizes differences and similarities in cultures while encouraging interaction across differences (Ibanez, Penas, & Saenz, 2006).

Mainstream: the ideas, attitudes, or activities regarded as normal or conventional in a society (Cook-Greuter, 2004).

Mainstream leadership: leaders and leadership characterizing the majority of leaders in a group of leaders, typically representing what is considered normal or conventional within the identified group (Barker, 2001).

Marginalization: The process whereby something or someone is pushed to the edge of a group and accorded less importance. This is chiefly a social phenomenon by which a minority or sub-group is excluded, and their needs or desires minimized or ignored (Hall & Carlson, 2016).

Multiculturalism: one view on describing society diversity with an underlying belief that culture can live side by side and that assimilation is not required (Thandeka & Grant, 2010).

Social justice: examines differences and diversity along with a deeper analysis of systems of power and privilege that contribute to social inequality. Social justice is not considered a single definition but includes democracy, political participation (Bell, 2016; Bialystok, 2014) and an understanding of power, oppression, and empowerment (Bell, 2016). Social justice is considered a process and a goal (Bell, 2016). A critical examination of institutional, cultural, and individual oppression is paramount with goals of empowerment, social responsibility and equal distribution of resources as aims of social justice (Bell, 2016).

Social oppression: a concept that describes the relationship between two categories of people in which one benefits from the systematic abuse and exploitation of the other. Occurs between categories of people and is distinct from the oppressive behaviour of individuals. In social oppression, all members of the dominant and subordinate groups are involved, regardless of individual attitudes or behaviour (Cudd, 2006).

Assumptions

There were several key assumptions in this study. First, I assumed that mainstream leaders in this study were willing to share honestly their understandings and views related to social justice and educational equity in their leadership practice. Second, I assumed that collected and analyzed data would reveal the understandings and practices of mainstream postsecondary leaders about social justice and educational equity on an individual level of understanding and about their practice. Third, I assumed that the postsecondary institutions in which the leaders' practices were diverse with a student body reflecting societal diversity. Fourth, I assumed that mainstream leaders would be aware of diversity in one or more forms and understand that diversity can affect students' academic, social, and eventual employment outcomes. The study was limited to the specific research questions and I did not address all areas of social justice and educational equality components.

Scope and Delimitations

Scholars have primarily examined the issues of social justice and educational equity in the K–12 sector. Of the studies I reviewed published in the last 5 to 10 years,

many occurred during significant early demographic shifts in population. Recent political events added a level of complexity to previous demographic shifts and increased awareness generally of diversity perspectives. This study was delimited to 4-year community colleges and institutes, in the Western region of Canada. All participants were leaders employed in postsecondary leadership roles. These roles included any formally designated role where the individual provides leadership with a group of faculty including chairs, coordinators, associate dean, assistant dean, director, associate vice president, vice president, provost, and president or equivalent. The study was delimited to mainstream postsecondary, post-probationary, and educational leaders who do not research or publish about social justice and educational equity. Length of time in the leadership role is noted in the study but was not be a delimiter in the choice of the participant. The scope of this study included mainstream leaders' understanding of social justice and educational equity about their leadership practice. All leaders came from the postsecondary community college or institute environments from the Western region of Canada. Student populations in these institutions ranged from 2,000 to over 20,000 students.

Limitations

In this study, I explored the understanding of social justice and educational equity of leaders employed in postsecondary community college or institutes. Given the small number of potential participants, the diversity of participants was limited. The study did not include postsecondary leaders senior to the dean's level. Another limitation was the available institutions meeting the community college or institute criteria from which to

recruit. Finally, I am a senior leader in a community college, at the level of dean, which created a consideration of strategies to mitigate bias in the collection and analysis of data.

Significance of the Study

This study provided new information about how the mainstream leaders in Canadian postsecondary education describe and understand social justice and educational equity in their leadership practice. The significance of this study lies in adding to the understanding and promotion of social justice and educational equity in leadership practice from a broader array of postsecondary leaders in community colleges and institutes. Increased awareness of the current level of understanding and promotion of social justice and educational equity informs potential leadership practices and policies, may focus attention on potential issues in postsecondary related to issues of social justice and equity. This study informs the future development of leaders in post-secondary education. Postsecondary leaders are influential in their institutions and often introduce practices that diffuse throughout the institution. Leaders connect with the broad spectrum of faculty and community as a conduit to the learning experience of students. As leaders, their influence and understanding of the system are critical to transformational change. Thus, this study contributes to the knowledge of their understanding and promotion of social justice and educational equity and is critical to inform future educational and leadership strategies.

Summary

Leaders in Canada's postsecondary institutions are increasingly responsible for leading and managing ethnoculturally diverse populations in their institutions. Variables

that contribute to population diversity are expanding (Furman, 2012). Leadership's understanding of social justice and educational equity is critical for leaders working with changing diversity climates. I identified the problem, purpose, and significance of this study in Chapter 1. I designed the research questions to focus on the understudied postsecondary leader and their understanding and perception of social justice and educational equity in their leadership practice. In Chapter 2, I will present a literature review of current research, related to social justice and educational equity in educational leadership and an examination of the conceptual frameworks that guided the development of this study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In democratic societies, there is an underlying belief in equity that dictates the same basic rights of equal treatment regardless of background, belief, economic status, race, religion, and gender (Beyer, 2012). Broadly, social justice and educational equity are central to the achievement of democratic ideals (Marshall & Oliva, 2010; Ryan & Tuters, 2017; Santamaría, 2014). Leaders in postsecondary institutions in Canada are responsible for leading and managing populations that are not only increasingly ethnoculturally diverse, but also marginalized (Carr et al., 2017; Marom, 2017; Marshall & Lee, 2017; Ryan & Tuters, 2017). However, on an individual basis, leaders do not necessarily possess the requisite abilities or understanding to promote social justice and educational equity practices (Carnevale & Strohl, 2013; Harper, 2012; Kelly & Brandes, 2010; Kezar, 2011; Patton, L. 2015).

Studies indicate that democratic participation relies on practice in action, including courageous conversations, negotiation, network building, and decision making about conflict-related to social difference and inequity located within critique and critical dialogue (Bickmore & Parker, 2014; Kisker, et al., 2016; Sears et al., 2014). Conventional educational experiences incline toward not promoting dialogue or action on topics critical for democracy (Bickmore & Parker, 2014; Sears et al., 2014). Bickmore and Parker (2014) found that teachers tend to engage in dialogue that provides a safe distance between the conversation and controversial topics. Sears et al. found that while democratic ideals are often present in school values statements, many students perceive themselves as voiceless regarding their opportunities to participate in democratic

practices. In education, if the focus on injustice is not deliberate and central, there is a tendency toward polite muted conversations without action.

In education, stakeholders, including leaders, in kindergarten to secondary schools (K–12) in the United States and Canada are starting to pay attention to social justice, specifically concerning preservice teacher education, curriculum, and instructional practice (Beachum, 2011; Kezar, 2011; Ladson-Billings, 1999; Marom, 2017; Santamaría & Santamaría, 2012; Snow, 2016; Wilson-Strydom, 2014). However, the postsecondary system research related to social justice has tended to focus on the role of students or faculty, not school leaders, in promoting social justice and educational equity (Cook, Krell, Hayden, Gracia, & Denitzio, 2016; Kezar, 2011; Kezar, Bertram, & Lester, 2011; Shirley, 2017). Few studies in the United States and Canada examine the role of leadership in the development of social justice and educational equity agendas in `postsecondary education (Farrell, 2016; Gordon & Ronder, 2016; Heppner, 2017; Pantic, 2017; Santamaría & Santamaría, 2012; Vogel, 2012).

Educational administrators and leadership increasingly recognize and acknowledge the need to improve practice and student outcomes for minority, economically disadvantaged, female, lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender, immigrants, and other students who have not uniformly been well served in postsecondary (Dukes, 2013; Educational Testing Services (ETS), 2015; Freudenberg et al., 2011; Ghosh, 2012; Myers, MacDonald, Jacquard, & McNeil, 2014; Picout & Hou, 2011; Rankin, Weber, Blumenfeld, & Frazer, 2010). However, there is little research on mainstream leaders in

postsecondary education and the understanding of social justice and educational equity in leadership practice.

In this chapter, I include the literature search strategy, the conceptual framework based on CST and Santamaría and Santamaría (2014) ACLT, the literature review, and summary. In the literature review, I analyze current studies exploring mainstream postsecondary leaders understanding of social justice and educational equity is lacking. I examined current peer review literature to identify a gap in mainstream postsecondary leaders understanding of social justice and educational equity, develop a problem statement, and support the overall dissertation.

Literature Search Strategy

I obtained the most current peer-reviewed research using several education databases, including SAGE, ERIC, ProQuest, and Education Research Complete through Walden University's Thoreau Library portal. I used Google Scholar to identify research articles not obtained through library databases. I used keywords related to the topics for discussion in this chapter: *social justice, social justice activism/advocacy, social justice identity, social justice leadership preparation, democracy, democratizing leadership, educational equity, educational equality, oppression, anti-oppressive, marginalization, cultural intelligence, educational leaders, educational administration, cultural diversity, cultural humility, cross-cultural leadership, applied critical leadership, culturally responsive, multicultural, community college, postsecondary, higher education educational equity/social justice, leadership for diversity, social justice,* and *education equity* entered singly and in various combinations to generate results in each of the

databases. I found empirical studies from 2000 to 2019, with studies selected from 2013 to 2019, along with a few seminal studies included in the literature review.

I have identified North American and international literature to provide as broad a base as possible for the literature review. A focus on preparation for social justice leadership, understanding of social justice by leaders, and the span of understanding and action are relevant to this study. Next, I discuss the conceptual framework used as a basis for this basic qualitative approach to the study.

Conceptual Framework

To frame this research, I drew upon CST (Leonardo, 2004) and ACLT (Santamaría & Santamaría, 2012). CST is a theory that is considered multidisciplinary and evolving, but with the primary objective of improvement of the human condition (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1944/2002; Marcuse, 1968). It was an ideal theory for my study and I used it to provide a foundation to research real-life issues in contemporary social organizations such as community colleges due to the use of critique and a close relationship with theory in action.

ACLT is a multi-dimensional leadership theory, which builds on critical theories, combining transformational leadership, critical race theory, and critical pedagogy (Santamaría & Santamaría, 2012). Santamaría and Santamaría (2012), in developing ACLT, built on the social context of educational communities to understand and utilize individual identity (race, class, gender, traditions etc.) promoted a strengths-based empowering action model of leadership particularly suited to the study of social justice and educational equity. I used this conceptual framework to provide the foundation for

the research and guides the interview questions, as well as for data interpretation and application.

Critical Social Theory

The founders of CST, Horkheimer, Adorno, Fromm, and Marcuse, focused on the human construction of the social forms of life. Horkheimer (1944) proposed that in a human enterprise, humans select the issues to study, the statement of the problem, and the interpretation or analysis of the issue. Horkheimer noted that humans construct the power or value of issues within the social context. CST is concerned with finding alternatives to presenting social conditions, which more adequately address human needs (Horkheimer, 1944). CST focuses on the empowerment of humans as individuals and as collectives (Marcuse, 1968). The value of inquiry is included in CST as the connection moving knowledge to action and promoting change in society (Horkheimer, 1944).

In CST individuals are the primary creators of their social world, ascribing meaning as relevant to them (Horkheimer, 1944). In using CST the researcher needs to be aware of and sensitive to the life world of the participants, as this is central to understanding an individual performing social actions (Marcuse, 1968). In my study, the use of CST focuses on the exploration of the life-world of the participant, which is key to discovering how social construction contributes to the participants' understanding of social justice and educational equity. The primary difference between traditional social theory and CST is the need for change is central to CST (Horkheimer, 1944). In CST, this occurs through active participation, observation, and analysis of contextual data (Marcuse, 1968). My study uses CST as an underpinning for the study to examine and

analyze the social context related to understanding social justice and educational equity in the participant's world.

Leaders operating in a CST paradigm reflect action and a sense of civic duty and are active in pursuing political and social change (Freire, 1985). While values and belief structures are resistant to change, some research in preservice education using a CST framework has shown some level of moving individuals from thought to action (Brown, 2006). In my study, the CST perspective is critical to framing how participants understand social justice and educational equity. The use of CST is central to the analysis of data about the potential for action using a social justice and educational equity framework.

Santamaría and Santamaría: Applied Critical Leadership Theory

ACLT provides a lens of connecting leadership theory to practice. Santamaría and Santamaría (2012) contended that leaders who analyze and think more deeply about their practice reflect on how their identity and their experiences contribute to their ability to see, understand, or consider alternate leadership practice. The conceptualization of ACLT typifies leaders who are transformational but move into the realm of critical inquiry (Santamaría & Santamaría, 2012). These leaders, consciously or unconsciously, think toward social justice and educational equity with less focus on looking good and more focus on doing good (Normore, 2008).

ACLT is a strengths-based model of leadership with leaders considering the social context of their educational community and understanding their identity from a positive perspective in contribution to a leadership practice (Santamaría & Santamaría, 2012).

Jayavant (2016), in a study of K–12 educational leaders, found that leaders embodied ACLT characteristics in choosing to lead from a value centred place that translated into levels of leadership for social justice and educational equity. Leaders practising in this perspective can discern and place their identity within educational communities and understand the strengths from which they operate to effect change.

Santamaría and Santamaría (2012) found that leaders operating within an ACLT framework are self-aware of their identity and purposely surround themselves with and understand individuals from diverse social groups who balance the leader's diversity lens. If leaders are from an identified privileged group, then they choose to look through a critical lens in their leadership to lead more effectively within the context of diversity (Jayavant, 2016). It is important to note that a leader may undertake a critical lens with or without specific theoretical knowledge, but still possess the values of social justice and educational equity without utilizing those specific terms. ACLT as a framework in my study was useful in providing perspective for assessing and analyzing leaders' awareness of their identity, their values, and their potential or actual ability toward alternative practices that shift toward social justice and educational equity. I used ACLT as a framework for the development of the interview question and in the analysis, discussion, and interpretation of findings.

In this study, I focused on the development of meaning, self-awareness, reflection and identity in exploring mainstream postsecondary leaders' understanding of social justice and educational equity. Mainstream leaders characterize the majority of leaders in a group of leaders and typically represent what is considered normal or conventional

within the identified group (Barker, 2001). This understanding is framed within their socially constructed context, including their identities as leaders. In this study, I sought to understand leaders in their formation of understandings of social justice and educational equity along with the factors that encourage leaders to promote social justice and educational equity and seek out alternate practices in educational leadership.

Literature Review

I exhausted current peer-reviewed research to identify a gap in social justice and educational equity literature, develop a problem statement, and support the overall dissertation. In this review, I highlight research on social justice and educational equity. I focus on how mainstream leaders come to understand social justice and educational equity in their practice. The literature indicates three key areas that influence an individual's ability to promote social justice and educational equity, namely disposition, capacity, and agency.

Agency relates to the ability to exercise control over the nature and quality of one's life with individuals being the producers and the products of social systems (Bandura, 2001). The agency of an individual is the potential to understand and act in the social environment dependent on an individual's dispositions and capacities. Disposition refers to personal tendencies to act in a specific way changeable, but intentional, inclinations (Hepler & Albarracín, 2013). Capacity from a social perspective is people's ability to work together and organize public relationships (Lichterman, 2009).

Disposition, Capacity, and Agency for Social Justice and Equity Leadership

Social justice and educational equity work arise from a focus on redistribution, recognition, and representation of resources (Fraser, 2002). Theoharis (2007) noted a shortage of research in how leaders enact justice in the face of opposition and how leaders sustain themselves to continue the pursuit of social justice and educational equity. Dispositions exhibited by individuals that encourage social justice and equity work is a primary focus of current research along with the translation of disposition toward the enactment of capacity and agency

Dispositions. There are four dispositions of primary focus: identity development, moral imperative, self-awareness, and relational.

Identity development. Individual development of identity is a critical element in contributing to resilience and commitment to social justice work (Furman, 2012; Santamaría, 2014; Santamaría & Gaëtane, 2014; Theoharis, 2007). Theoharis's (2007) qualitative study is a seminal work on social justice in educational leadership comprised of seven participants, all public school principals, identified as coming to their role with a social justice orientation. In this study, Theoharis identified that participants' demonstrated identity development contributed to their resilience and commitment to social justice work. In particular, the participants demonstrated a reflective consciousness and self-awareness that appeared to assist their resilience to the resistance of others to social justice work.

In another seminal work, Furman's (2012) meta-analysis of research from 2002 to 2010 contributed to the examination of the development of capacities for leadership in

social justice. Furman's study identified that at the personal dimension level, an individual displays the ability for in-depth, critical, and honest self-reflection. Furman noted that this identifies for individuals the assumptions and biases that limit or expand their understanding of social justice and equity in matters such as race, class, and gender. Furman categorized this as the storied self when at a personal level, individuals understand their life and identity as a story and can relate it in context to others life stories.

Santamaría (2014) and Santamaría and Jean Marie (2014) in two separate studies identified that leaders from nondominant groups tended to draw on positive aspects of their identities to dispel negative stereotypes for their identified groups. Santamaria's (2014) study included six participants working as leaders in K–16 education, one of the few studies to include postsecondary leaders. The study identified participants for their social justice practices, a criterion common to the majority of studies analyzed here. All participants identified as non-white and represented a range of races, ethnicities, cultures, gender, and linguistic backgrounds. As one component, the study examined how identities (e.g. subjectivity, biases, assumptions, race, class, gender, and traditions) of leaders of colour affected leadership goals, decisions, and practices. Santamaría found that in the leadership role, these participants tapped into the positive attributes of the identities, displaying a disposition to address issues connected to social justice and educational equity.

In a concurrent phenomenological study, Santamaría and Gaëtane (2014) explored and examined in two phases, the experiences of five school principals to understand how

their cross-cultural experiences affected their leadership practices. All participants in both phases were from the United States with Phase 1 comprised of two African American principals and Phase 2 consisting of two principals of colour, as distinct from African-American and one identified as White. School principals in this study identified more with their race and class than gender. As noted in Santamaría (2014), all participants drew on and consciously displayed the positive attributes of their identities to dispel negative stereotypes for their identified groups. This study found that nondominant culture leaders tended to use their identities to bring contentious issues to the table, identified in the study as avoided by dominant culture leaders.

A few studies recognized the importance of individual experience to the contribution to social justice and equity identities (Arar et al. 2017; Carpenter et al. 2017; Silva, Slater, & Lopez, 2017; Zembylas & Iasonos, 2016; Zembylas & Iasonos, 2017). Carpenter et al. study of 12 assistant school principals employed in persistently low achieving schools in the United States often described early experiences with injustices orienting them to a social justice framework. Participants identified fairness, equity, and relationship building concerning their identity structure. This finding is similar to the themes identified in Santamaría and Gaëtane's (2014) study.

Several international studies highlight the relationship between the identity of participants developed in response to local conditions of strife and highlighted by participants as necessary in the development of their social justice and equity agendas. Zembylas and Iasonos (2016) in a single person study, examined the context of social justice for a female principal in Cyprus. This case study reflects a local context of ethnic

partition between the Greek-Cypriot majority and the Turkish-Cypriot minority, along with an increase of non-indigenous students (4.41 % in 1995-1996 to 14.88% in 2011-2012), and an economic crisis. Gender identity emerged as significant in this study, in that the identity of the female principal as a nurturer influenced advocacy patterns emerging as risk-taking behaviour in the pursuit of additional resources for marginalized students.

In the larger qualitative exploratory study of 23 elementary school principals set in Cyprus, Zembylas and Iasonos (2017) focused on how elementary school leaders understood issues of social justice and multiculturalism in a deeply divided society. This study showed how participants held to their identities in standing firm against racism and marginalization, but intersected with community identity to build trust. Participants tap into their difficult backgrounds and their identities to intersect with others to build bridges in a divided society.

Arar et al. (2017) compared school principals in Israel (Arab and Jewish) and Turkey in how they perceive and practice their role in promoting social justice. This study examined inter-cultural identity in promoting social justice. Life experiences were important in this study in identify formation, with Israeli principals expressing motivation through faith to address societal imperatives. Turkish school principals tended to view social justice as a personal endeavour, not directed by government or religion. An interesting difference in this study is that while both cultures and religions have long embedded components of service to the less fortunate, the predominant expression of

social justice mirrored western conceptualizations. The authors attributed this to the limited production of non-western research in social justice and equity.

Silva et al. (2017) employed qualitative interpretative case studies to determine views of social justice and equity of directors from each of three countries (Costa Rica, Mexico, and Spain). This study emphasized the cultural context and identities of the leaders. Similar to Santamaría and Jean Marie (2014), Wang (2015), and Zembylas and Iasonos (2016), all of Silva et al.'s participants reflected on social justice and their disposition toward social justice built upon their experiences and identities. Participants were acutely aware of their local context, but their understanding of social justice related to the universal principles of fairness and equity of opportunities, fair resource distribution, and education as a right.

Arar (2018) studied Arab female leaders, all principals, in the K–12 school system in Israel. As with the majority of studies I reviewed, the participants presented as committed to social justice. This study explored motivations for social justice, common personal characteristics, and educational values. Arabs within Israel represent the minority, and thus distributive and cultural social justice issues predominate. Additionally, female principals are rare in a male-dominated society, thus examining social justice identity from a unique gender and cultural context.

As with previous studies, all participants in Arar's (2018) study developed their identities under oppressive circumstances and moved into leadership as women within a patriarchal society. Participants represented Muslim, Christian, and the Druze faiths and their educational practices and identities tended to mirror their religious faiths.

Participants identified a need to reduce educational and social gaps and change the inequitable and inadequate distribution of resources. Similar to the studies by Arar et al. (2017) and Silva et al. (2017), all participants presented an acute awareness of local context. The underlying motivation and disposition for social justice outlined in this study is a deep critical awareness of a state of oppression, exclusion, and marginality in society.

Moral imperative and self-awareness. Individuals engaging in social justice, and equity work often describe a strong moral imperative, as well as a deep sense of self-awareness about beliefs and values. In Theoharis's (2007) study, all participants expressed a strong moral obligation to raise achievement for marginalized students. All participants identified issues of race, class, gender, disability, and other marginalizing factors as central to their social justice and equity advocacy. Similarly, Furman's (2012) study identified that at the personal dimension, an individual displays the ability for deep, critical, and honest self-reflection. Furman noted that this isolates for an individual the assumptions and biases that limit or expand their understanding of social justice and equity such as race, class, and gender. This finding reinforced in Zembylas and Iasonos' (2017) study confirming participants' deep reflection on experiences and fundamental values.

Armstrong et al. (2013), in a qualitative study conducted with 34 identified social justice leaders, all school principals in Ontario, Canada, provided a comprehensive understanding of the educational leaders' conceptions, beliefs, and actions related to social justice. In alignment with Theoharis (2007), participants identified strongly that in

contrast to colleagues, they felt a strong moral imperative toward social justice, considering it the right thing to do. Participants identified as critical the creation of opportunities for students by undoing systemic and individual oppression as well as embedding social justice into teaching and other activities.

Wang (2015), in a study comparable to Armstrong et al. (2013) study with 22 school principals in Ontario, Canada, explored how the principals with a social justice commitment understand and perceive social justice in their leadership practices. All participants in Wang's study understood social justice as equity with an overlap of concepts. As with previously noted studies (Armstrong et al., 2013; Furman, 2012; Theoharis, 2007), both concepts carried a moral connotation for participants, and an understanding of the right thing to do and considering social justice as their job. In this study, participants understood equity and social justice not as equality, but as equity or an understanding of what is good for all, particularly regarding equity of resources and access.

Jayavant's (2016) study, a qualitative comparative case study of five principals from four K to 12 schools in New Zealand, examined characteristics and behaviours of effective leadership for social justice and equity for academic achievement along with the leadership of highly diverse student populations. This study reinforces the significance of leaders' underlying values, beliefs, and morals relative to social justice and culturally responsible leadership (Furman, 2012; Theoharis, 2007). In Jayavant's study eight characteristics emerged from the data analysis, specifically, self-awareness, including cultural awareness and social awareness as leaders for social justice and equity, followed

by moral purpose encompassing values and belief systems that sharpened their identity and trust at all levels consisting of relational trust with staff, students, parents, and the wider school community. This study reconfirmed the critical importance of self-awareness, adding to the emerging ACL theory.

Relational and other significant dispositional attributes. Other dispositional components of note arose as significant in some studies. The ability to display a global or broad perspective themed in Theoharis's (2007) and Theoharis and Causton-Theoharis (2008) studies which used the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) definition of disposition as to what a leader "believes in, values, and is committed to" (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1996, p. 10). Three dispositions emerged of participant responses as essential to social justice work, namely the ability to take a global/theoretical perspective, possess a bold and imaginative vision, and embrace a sense of agency.

Similar to a global perspective, Zembylas and Iasonos (2017) found that participants attempted to find alternative explanations and ways of understanding situations often taken for granted or considered normative. This perspective, similar to broader perspectives, provided evidence for a level of critical multiculturalism, which demonstrated a capacity for institutional and systemic awareness not significantly found or explored in other studies. The heightened awareness of participants showed how they created small openings or cracks for social justice in everyday leadership.

A significant proportion of participants in Wang's (2015) study identified humour as a dispositional component. Participants indicated that humour created a safe place to

promote alternative perspectives and goodwill in the social justice process. Participants who identified humour in this study used it as an advantage to balance the seriousness of social justice work with the non-seriousness of self, relating in part to identity development and self-awareness.

Ryan and Tuters (2017) in a qualitative study of 37 formal and informal socially justice committed school leaders reported some unique dispositions related to social justice. Participants in this study identified with a less overt or discreet disposition. As leaders, they established themselves as relational team players with credible and competent profiles who chose their social justice priorities carefully promoting ideas in a non-overt way with colleagues. Members of this group strongly identified themselves as self-congratulatory, not requiring external recognition for efforts.

Drago-Severson and Blum-DeStefano (2019) in an American study of seven K–12 educational leaders examined development orientations or ways of knowing which influenced leadership for social justice. Four ways of knowing were identified: instrumental (concrete), socializing (other-focused), self-authoring (reflective), and self-transforming (inter-connected). Developmental orientation influenced educational leaders' actions in social justice promotion. The authors found as leaders moved through the stages, an ability to increase collectivity, use the reflective self, and manage paradoxes. As leaders progressed in development stages social justice became more of an ingrained process with an approach that opened the leader to a variety of ways of knowing.

Influence of Education on Disposition, Agency, and Capacity

Dispositions, agency, and capacity are innate and formed from social experiences (Bandura, 2001). Dispositions, agency and capacity, are not static in individuals but subject to development under the right conditions (Furman, 2012; Santamaría, 2014). The promotion of social justice and equity in education is complex due in part to human resistance to change (Berkovich, 2014). In this section, I analyze current research on education to advance social justice dispositions, agency, and capacity.

Educational program design's influence on social justice and equity orientation. Some studies examined whether the deliberate inclusion of social justice and equity principles change individual understanding or behaviour. Vogel (2012) conducted a qualitative study of 54 educators who within the previous five years, had completed or enrolled in an educational leadership preparation program in a university in the United States. The program in the study prepared graduates to become school principals, with a curriculum that covered critical theory, moral and transformative leadership, multiculturalism, diversity, and ethical frameworks. Within the total program, all of these elements were present, but not uniformly integrated across all courses. Students completed a core group of courses and a range of electives dependent on their career goals.

The results of Vogel's study revealed a limited understanding by participants of social justice, social justice strategies, and multicultural education. While multicultural education policies and practices within the participants' work context stood out in the program, a limited change occurred in participants' or graduates' strategies toward

deliberate social justice practices. While participants displayed a strong understanding of transformative leadership principles, they were limited in the ability to relate the principles to social justice in practice. Vogel suggested in the analysis the need for the meaningful integration of social justice principles by the learner, and there is a need for a deliberate social justice framework and integration of social justice activities.

Boske (2015) in a study 98 participants enrolled in a graduate course with a focus on leading for social justice appears to support the inclusion of a deliberate social justice framework to assist graduates in developing active social justice strategies. The educational preparation program outlined by Boske encouraged self-reflection by engaging learners in sensory reflective practices about themselves as leaders; context informed understandings of self-related to others and self-influenced daily interactions. The course promoted the disposition toward and the capacity for deep reflection previous identified as important as well as the critical reflection of participants in the understanding of racism through the senses of sight, sound, and vision (Boske, 2015). Highlighted in Boske's study were reflections on identity, values, beliefs, decision-making, power, privilege, policy/practices, and institutionalized practices. Themes emerging from this study included increased critical consciousness, making connections between personal knowledge, and taking action.

Boske's (2015) study highlighted the promotion of the reflective aspect of critical consciousness through education. Forty-five of the 98 participants at the start of the course, who identified as White, expressed a belief that racism did not exist in the United States, citing the election of a Black president as a post-civil rights era. Forty-three

participants acknowledged a personal role in oppressive practices with a shift in critical awareness to the call to action. Eighty-five participants expressed a need for safe space, similar to that identified by Theoharis (2007) to think critically about how their education and their profession afforded or did not allow them to think about the social, political, and economic factors affecting schooling.

Boske's study (2015) contributes to the perspective that a multi-layered educational approach moves individual capacity from reflection to action. This study mirrors the importance of reflection as outlined in previously cited studies (Armstrong et al., 2013; Furman, 2012; Jayavant, 2016; Santamaría, 2014). In alignment with Furman (2012), this study notes the assignment of meaningful action through program projects to encourage the capacity for reflection and to connect the critical personal awareness of self and collective action. In effect, this program promoted the storied self as outlined by Furman (2012) as significant to understanding social justice and the development of agency.

Gordon and Ronder (2016) conducted a qualitative study of 12 students in a culturally responsive leadership (CRL) Master's degree preparation program. CRL used as a strategy in social justice leadership involves individuals learning about their own and other cultures, examining cultural biases and the effects of those biases on others (Ahram et al., 2011). As a component of education for social justice, CRL models social responsibility, pluralism, and mutual understanding, within classroom instruction.

Participants included six beginning of program students, six end of program students, and six non-program participants (principals). The results of this study showed

that the end of program students demonstrated the most sophistication in CRL and were the only participants to engage in strategies for collaborative leadership, development of the stakeholder relationship and diversity discussions. Novice students at the beginning of the program demonstrated more knowledge of CRL than non-participants, thus indicating a strong self-selected disposition toward social justice. Non-student participant principals displayed a focus on bureaucratic, technical leadership, and program solutions for marginalized students.

This study reinforces both Furman (2012) and Boske (2015) in suggesting that educational programs do shift understanding, disposition, and capacity for social justice and educational equity. A limitation of Boske's study is that the students in the program were teachers, and the comparison group of non-students were principals, possibly affecting contextual experiences. However, analysis by Gordon and Ronder (2016) indicated a willingness on the part of teachers to engage in the diversity discussions with an expectation that principals as leaders would promote discussion. This study conveys the potential importance of education on non-committed social justice and educational equity leaders.

Curriculum design's influence on social justice and educational equity development. Berkovich's (2017) study examined the educational design for social justice leadership programs. In alignment with agency, Berkovich suggested that leadership in social justice depends on the person-environment fit and context fit. Berkovich maintained that for social justice leadership to progress the environment must provide an opportunity to change attitude(s), support both the process of change and the

acquisition of knowledge for application, along with rewards for embracing change. Berkovich's analysis recommended two activities: inward activities directed at stimulating dialogue and outward activities directed at practice related dialogue.

Berkovich (2014) noted that academics seldom discuss personal and professional perceptions, leading to a lack of discourse about reflective identity recognized as critical to social justice development (Berkovich, 2014). Providing safe space opportunities for facilitated dialogue on how dominant professional cultures promote hegemony is potentially transformative (Berkovich, 2017). While the study is not in higher education, Berkovich recommended the development of capacity for reflective practitioners, who constantly criticize and reflect on their practice, can span the education continuum. This finding is similar to those in studies by Armstrong et al. (2013); Furman (2012); Jayavant (2016); and Santamaría (2014), concerning the importance of the development of deep reflection and awareness in the development of critical consciousness to develop agency for social justice.

Hernandez and Marshall (2017) examined how coursework shapes thinking about social justice. The authors analyzed the written reflections, and written assignments of 10 participants enrolled in a capstone course of a principal preparation program. The course examined themes related to issues of racism, gender bias, and socio-economic issues influencing learner responsiveness with the intent to prepare principals to meet all learner needs in schools. The course designed on Bell and Griffin's (1997) work incorporated the goals of social justice, cited in previous studies, including increased personal awareness, expanding knowledge, and encouraging action (Armstrong et al.,

2013; Furman, 2012; Theoharis, 2007; Theoharis & Causton-Theoharis, 2008). An action element isolated in Hernandez and Marshall's study, but not others are teaching and experiential practices related to equity audits used as a learning method to promote real-life reflection and analyze how schools met the needs of diverse learners.

Hernandez and Marshall's (2017) study found that participants on entering the course displayed considerable variance in their understanding of social justice issues with three thinking approaches emerging in the analysis: questioning, class-blind, and sitting back. Upon course completion, the participants developed a focus on defining specific strategies and action plans for their schools. Hernandez and Marshall's study reinforces the combination of reflection and action as being essential to both understanding, personal change and capacity. Additionally, this study presents a method of moving individuals from internal thought to external action in social justice practice.

Allen, Harper, and Koschoreck (2017) examined a graduate-level course for preservice school principals in the United States to study the relationship between social justice curriculums and dispositions for social justice. Similar to the studies by Boske (2015) and Hernandez and Marshall (2017), the authors used course assignments of 112 participants, analyzing for beginning and concluding dispositions toward social justice.

Dispositions selected for Allen et al. (2017) study originated from the Interstate School Leaders Licensing Consortium (ISLLC) and the Administrator Dispositions Index (ADI). Thematic analysis of participants' course assignments revealed a positive shift in five specific areas specifically the common good over personal interests, diversity as an

asset; providing a safe and supportive learning environment, every student learning and building on diverse social and cultural assets.

Again, as with the previously cited studies (Armstrong et al., 2013; Berkovich, 2014; Furman, 2012; Hernandez & Marshall, 2017; Theoharis, 2007), the push toward deep reflection as the course assignment focus appears to develop or promote dispositions critical in the development of both social justice agency and capacity. In contrast to the studies of Boske (2015) Hernandez and Marshall (2017), this study involved the graduate student in a short 5-week online-only course.

Curriculum design focused on assignments that promote real-life reflection, and experiential learning about social justice and equity appear to encourage dispositional development. A limiting factor in the studies is a lack of measure on the initial level of commitment and knowledge related to social justice and equity. Vogel's (2012) study provided a measure of participant knowledge on program entry, but the generalist nature of the program appeared to be a limiting factor in social justice development. Knowledge of an individual's prior interest and commitment to social justice is lacking in research. Further research on the typical educator relative to social justice and educational equity is required to develop an understanding of the broader landscape of educator viewpoints on equity for education.

Leadership Strategies to Implement Social Justice and Equity in Education

To move social justice and educational equity forward individuals must move internal beliefs toward the external community of action. Determining how the pieces fit within an individual sphere of influence is complex. Individuals as leaders, whether in an

informal or formal role must harness the inclination or disposition to act with agency, capture one's identity to act with agency for progressing social justice and educational equity (Theoharis & Causton-Theoharis, 2008). Discussed in the following section are strategies identified in the research literature.

Agency as a continuum. Dispositions and capacity ultimately lead to some level of agency. However, agency is on a continuum of strength as agency resides with an individual, but can take on many permutations. Furman's (2012) study outlines a framework, which can represent the agency continuum. Furman's work described previously starts at the personal dimension and extends across the interpersonal, communal, systemic, and ecological. In each dimension, the individual interacts with agency at a more complex level, including more interactions and complexity. However, across each dimension, Furman noted that the strength of ability or agency could vary from an individual possessing knowledge but not action toward the individual applying knowledge into actions at various levels of intensity. Actions, according to Furman across the levels can include team building, the creation of a safe space for dialogue, equity audits, and a variety of strategies appropriate to the level to enact social justice practice. The individual is not static and may move in either direction at any time across the dimensions.

Moving from internal to external is demonstrated differently across studies. In some studies, the ability to be out there and deal with controversy identifies as critical (Armstrong et al., 2013; Santamaría, 2014). Santamaría and Jean Marie (2014) differentiated the ability of individuals to bring contentious issues to the table, while

Jayavant (2016) identified the ability to initiate courageous conversations. In contrast, Ryan and Tuters' (2017) participants moved across continuums discreetly, choosing to be more team players and strategically mobilize social justice priorities. In most studies, doing better for students was a predominant theme for declaring social justice intent z external strife were more likely to identify participants who mobilized quickly around inequity or disparity issues of students (Arar et al., 2017; Carpenter et al., 2017; Silva et al., 2017; Zembylas & Iasonos, 2016; Zembylas & Iasonos, 2017).

Creation of safe space. As a leadership strategy, the creation of safe spaces for dialogue and action about social justice occurs in multiple studies. Theoharis's (2007) study attributed the use of safe space in the prevention of leader burn out as a counter to managing social justice and equity practice resistance. Furman (2012) noted it as a strategy across the interpersonal and communal dimension. Boske (2015) indicated that participants expressed a need for safe space to think critically about whether their education and profession afforded or did not afford opportunities to think about social, political, and economic factors affecting social justice integration. Berkovich (2017) noted safe space in the discussion of external practice related dialogue. Allen et al. (2017) created a safe space environment for participants; fostering preferred dispositions to create safe and supportive learning environments. Wang (2015) identified the creation of climates that challenge power and privilege, although safe space does not receive specific mention as a strategy. Studies occurring across multicultural settings indicated a preference for safe space with individuals occupying similar identities (Arar et al., 2017; Silva et al., 2017; Zembylas & Iasonos, 2016; Zembylas & Iasonos, 2017). Domestic or

Western studies usually refer to safe space, or may peripherally consider safe space in subtle scaffolding strategies to introduce social justice and equity in a non-threatening manner (Ryan & Tuters, 2017).

Creating a bold vision. Several studies indicate that the leader in social justice expresses a vision or more often a bold vision for social justice. Building on the disposition and capacity for self-reflection and the storied self (Furman, 2012) the bold vision is the next more common logical step. Theoharis and Causton-Theoharis (2008) directly identified the disposition of a bold and imaginative vision as critical to strategy implementation. Armstrong et al. (2013) indicated that participant's with a strong and defined moral purpose toward social justice externalized the moral imperative, leading to an individual's strong vision and subsequent action. Boske (2015) contended that expanded personal awareness encourages vision and action. Wang's (2015) participants represented a bold vision in promoting climates that constantly challenged ideas of power and privilege.

Jayavant (2016) identified leadership characteristics that transpired into altering others' mindsets and demonstrating transformational leadership to influence others. Additionally, Jayavant noted that leaders' identity shaped the vision toward a culturally relevant context. Zembylas and Iasonos (2017) found that participants took a firm stance in their vision, standing against racism and nationalism. Participants in the Zembylas and Iasonos study sought to find alternative explanations for taken for granted situations, which often expressed themselves in a bold vision. In contrast, participants in the Ryan and Tuters study (2017) possessed vision, but often expressed their vision regarding

already identified group priorities, thus avoiding confrontation. International studies demonstrated the promotion of social justice but varied in the presence of an expressed bold vision, depending on the local complexities. The directors in Silva's et al. (2017) study varied dependent on the human rights issues within their countries, expressing vision more from a global democratic perspective or inclusion. Arar (2018) indicated a strong vision for the principal female participants. However as female Arabs in Israel, the expression of a bold vision varied within the context of the groups they occupied.

Communication strategies. Building on a bold vision, communication emerged as a key strategy in several studies. Furman (2012) identified the use of the storied self as the ability to transmit authentic information about one's identity to others, encouraging a reciprocal reaction on the part of others. In the dimension of community, communication of democracy across groups is critical in the Furman study with a deliberative democracy focus on marginalized groups. Theoharis (2007) did not single out communication but identified advanced presentation skills as a critical strategy for social justice promotion. Santamaría (2014) isolated the use of counter-stories as a form of communication to counter racist narratives. Wang (2015), as noted earlier, is the only study to identify humour, creating communication about social justice in a non-threatening manner to build a sense of community. Ryan and Tuters' (2017) participants, as previously noted, tended toward subtle and non-confrontational or discreet communication in their social justice practices. Arar et al. (2017) identified the theme of a humanist viewpoint of active listening in communication to convey concern and improve access to

communication. Arar (2018) noted communication in a multicultural discourse to build community (Bogotch & Shields, 2014).

As s sub-set of communication and to some degree, bold vision, courageous conversation presented as a critical strategy in leadership for social justice and equity. Santamaría (2014) introduced critical conversations as a component of ACLT. Santamaría and Jean Marie (2014) noted that participants frequently engaged in critical conversations. Zembylas and Iasonos (2016) and Zembylas and Iasonos (2017) noted courageous conversations or a cross-cultural adaptation within their two studies. Jayavant (2016) noted critical conversations as part of critical leadership. Hamm, Dogurga, and Scott (2016) engaged in community-based critical conversations as a strategy to confront potential and actual conflict within the rapidly diversifying rural community.

Managing resistance, ally work, and alliances. This grouping represents strategies related to managing resistance and building community. The themes of ally work or building alliance occur in several studies, usually at the level of community. Theoharis (2009) categorized alliances as the building of safe spaces with like-minded individuals. Furman (2012) identified the development of alliances in the interpersonal and community dimensions, usually within the context of building trusting relationships. Santamaría (2014) noted resistance as a significant barrier to social justice and equity work, with study participants labelling leadership strategies to counter resistance as teaching, empowering, and coaching. Armstrong et al. (2013) acknowledged a

preference for consensus but did not identify ally work in their study, with participants using positional authority as needed.

While not explicitly ally work, Santamaría and Gaëtane (2014) noted that participants tended toward consensus and convergence, with all community members honoured with a deliberate practice including the voices of the marginalized. Torrance and Forde (2017), in their study, identified the building of support by head-teachers to draw support and convey authority as an essential element. Carpenter et al. (2017) noted that the assistant principals directly identified themselves as allies in their social justice and equity work. Ryan and Tuters (2017), in their discussion of discreet activism for social justice, found ally building inherent in the overall subtle approach to activism. Studies outside of the Western context noted spirituality and faith in ally work (Arar, 2018; Arar et al., 2017; Silva et al., 2017) along with identifying commonalities across divisive communities to form alliances.

Context, timing, and political astuteness. Shields and Hesbol (2019) in an American case study of three K–12 principals' leadership and belief practices, found that actions in schools were out of alignment with stated district missions and values. Mindsets, bias, and deficit assumptions prevailed. While each participant made a difference in a particular way within their environment toward social justice and educational equity, the prevalence of subtle and counteractive mindsets made change efforts difficult and transitory.

Kowalchuk (2019) in a critical qualitative case study of 14 principals in Ontario found five practices that leaders tended to engage in to enact social justice leadership:

demonstrate social justice, challenge the status quo, exercise critical instructional leadership, shape and preserve respectful relationships, and honor voice. Kowalchuk found that the leaders were reflective in their practice and action and described their privilege and power to inform their leadership for social justice. What Kowalchuk indicated she did not hear in the narrative was understanding of how some constructions dominate and others are suppressed or oppressed or an understanding of why neutrality is not feasible. Kowalchuk advocated a future study in which marginalized and non-marginalized leaders examine how their social position influences student success.

Similarly, Wang (2018), in a Canadian study of 22 elementary and middle school principals, investigated how principals promote social justice to redress marginalization, inequity, and divisive action that are widespread in schools. Wang found that leaders demonstrated a people-centered approach, including developing others for social justice. Participants in this study demonstrated highly individualized approaches to promoting social justice but showed minimal awareness of how institutional norms and practices produced social, political, and economic inequities. The ability to deconstruct practices appeared limited.

Brooks, Normore, and Wilkinson (2017) studied the theoretical connection between educational leadership and social justice. The authors studied this connection in the context of immigration and changing world demographics, which will profoundly influence educational leadership. The authors examine leadership for social justice from two inter-related domains: an educational domain (curriculum, assessment and pedagogy) and the equity domain (critical consciousness, knowledge, and skills). The

two domains interact, with the educational domain representing technique and equity domain representing philosophical and educational components, which drive the motivation for social justice work. The authors proposed that these two domains must be in synergy for effective social justice leadership. The authors proposed that timing is essential for successful leadership in social justice. They advised that leaders need to have a concept of timing, which includes context, pretext, and post-text. Context is the leader's current understanding of equity issues in their educational setting and community. Included is a leaders' understanding of the prevalent "isms" (racism, sexism, ableism, oppression, etc.), the dynamics that affect their practice, and how their work is facilitated and constrained.

Pre-text is a critical time component, which includes an awareness of the history of the local context within a postmodern perspective meaning that everyone's history is different and one person's liberation may be another's oppression (Brooks & Miles, 2006). Post-text is the ability to articulate a future vision from a present positioning. The future vision requires monitoring for progress toward short and long-term outcomes for a more equitable future.

Related to this work are the political context and political strategy. While not noted often in studies on social justice and equity, it is on occasion, encouraged as a strategy to counter resistance. Armstrong et al. (2013) examined educational leaders' understanding of social justice work, challenges, and micropolitical strategies used by leaders to foster equitable systems and practices. Participants in this study reported the use of indirect political techniques such as mobilizing marginalized groups around issues.

The outcomes of this study revealed that participants identified the use of positional authority as a strategy.

Social justice and equity strategies build on the dispositions of individuals. Studies indicate the use of various strategies to translate the promotion of social justice externally. Discreet and outward activist modes of promoting social justice and equity strategy are identified in the research, although activist strategies are more common (Ryan & Tuters, 2017). As identified earlier, research specific to leadership on social justice and equity is predominant in the K–12 sector. The next section will discuss the limited research on social justice and equity-related to postsecondary education.

Social Justice and Postsecondary Education

In this section, I summarize research related to social justice and equity in higher education. Higher education encompasses education beyond K–12, usually vocational, college, and university. As with previous sections, this section includes literature from quantitative, qualitative, and mixed model approaches to research.

Social justice, equity, and access to postsecondary education. Wilson-Strydom (2014) tackled issues of social justice in higher education from an access perspective. Wilson-Strydom promoted the idea that postsecondary education needs to integrate and promote social justice and equity actively. Wilson-Strydom used South Africa as a real-world case and the issue of educational access to discuss social justice change as South Africa moved from apartheid to democracy. Three theorists: Rawls, Young, and Fraser, are used to explore social justice within the South African case.

Wilson-Strydom (2014) highlighted the scarcity of discussion in higher education on systemic issues of diversity. The author used Rawls' work to discuss meritocracy in higher education and the marginalization of access to higher education, then Fraser's work to illustrate the issues of parity in higher education, interrogating structural barriers to both access and success in the higher education of marginalized groups. Finally, Young's work highlighted the creation and maintenance of inequity in higher education. Wilson-Strydom advocated for foundational research that unpacks higher education making way to create more just and equitable postsecondary structures at all levels.

Peercy and Svenson (2016), in a quantitative study, explored the connection between postsecondary education, equity, and human development. As with Wilson-Strydom (2014), issues of access and equity dominated. Using secondary source data, the authors demonstrated a strong relationship between the access of individuals to postsecondary education and social and economic equity in societies. Countries with higher levels of civil liberties demonstrated strong relationships to social and economic equity in society. The authors argued that given the positive relationship between postsecondary education and equity that issues of access in higher education along with ensuring a diverse student body are critical. Peercy and Svenson note that the continued development of sophisticated data analytics allows for a better understanding of changes in income and social stratifications in society related to access to higher education.

Postsecondary education, social justice, and meritocracy. Santamaría (2014) noted that postsecondary leaders identified issues that were more global than those recognized by K–12 leaders. However, as with Wilson-Strydom (2014), Santamaría

noted that overall, except in discipline-based research; postsecondary education tends to take a global but safe approach to social justice issues. As large institutions with diverse student bodies, the authors recognized a complex relationship with social justice promotion and governance. Postsecondary institutions are identifiable in their own right and often individually closer to power and scrutiny at the local, regional and national levels. Wilson-Strydom and Santamaría identified pushing boundaries in postsecondary environments as necessary within the scope of research, but less likely to play out easily in active strategies.

Social justice, postsecondary education, and societal outcomes. Leaders in higher education perceive themselves as more isolated than K–12 leaders when engaged in social justice work (Santamaría, 2014; Wilson-Strydom, 2014). Wilson-Strydom noted that leaders in higher education identified that within their discipline-based silos, it was challenging to present institutional uniformity of purpose for social justice. The silo effect tends to result, as noted previously, in safe initiatives and specific group support often linked to access such as indigenous populations, ethnic composite, and inclusion issues (Wilson-Strydom, 2014) rather than an overall institutional commitment to the purposes of social justice and equity.

McArthur (2016) provided a reasoned critique relating to outcomes, assessment, and postsecondary education. McArthur pointed out that assessment is a key driver for what and how students learn in higher education. McArthur noted that the marketization of higher education and links to employment could mute the larger conversation of the education of citizens and the development of fair and just societies. While most

institutions of higher education include some element of civic responsibility and justice into mission statements, the words do not necessarily translate to uniform action. However, pools of social justice may exist in higher education.

` While social justice may not be explicit in the higher education discussion, McArthur (2016) noted that fairness does remain foundational to the discussion. In particular, McArthur noted that postsecondary institutions are often obsessed with assessment fairness, which in turn associates with policies and processes that govern the assessment process. However, when overall social justice and equity mission and vision is absent or weak, various factors can derail the educational process. For example, the pursuit of international students for diversity and economic reasons lends to issues relative to social justice (Killick, 2017). Navigating assessment in Anglophone postsecondary institutions leading to a deficit mentality about the international student. Rather than promoting diversity, assessment, as Killick pointed out, is often a source of conflict. Institutions rarely invite international students to provide input in developing culturally relevant assessments (Killick, 2017).

Exam assessment boards common in academic and professional settings are rooted in institutional history. McArthur (2016) and Killick (2017) noted that the values of white masculine establishments and capitalist economies remain dominant in Anglophone education postsecondary education. Rules of assessment are a social construction. Engaging with learning versus the right number of references to include in a paper is one example where proceduralism can affect both faculty and student. Faculty

may hide behind the procedure, with students caught up in obsessing about the right answer versus the actual learning.

McArthur's (2016) research included working with students as stakeholders in the assessment process. Overall, early findings indicated a tendency by students to go toward assessments that fit the broad spectrum of abilities. Killick's (2017) study recommends critical intercultural practices to battle the marginalization of minority students. Killick built on McArthur's work in investigating strategies to develop agency and take action in a globalizing world, engaging students' cultural identities through a critical exploration of diverse perspectives. In effect, this work is similar to dispositional social justice identity development outlined for social justice leadership **(**Furman, 2012; Santamaría, 2014; Santamaría & Jean Marie, 2014; Theoharis, 2007).

Discipline-based social justice and equity research. Hudson et al. (2017) is a rare disciplined based study inside higher education, examining the representation of social justice discourses in 72% of PhD programs of social work delivered in the United States. Researchers examined language in mission and vision statements and program manuals for four categories of language: mentioning, theorizing, action, and integration. The documents are an artefact of the intended curriculum and may not represent the actual education; however, they are an important view of the intent of programs.

The vast majority of programs mention language related to social justice and educational equity in mission and coursework statements. The vast majority of the language appears to mention social justice and educational equity, but with little context and occasionally inserting language promoting social justice and equity action. As with

other studies, the conceptualization of social justice was highly varied. Social work programs, as a discipline, are one of the few educational programs with an intended and expressed program outcome for social justice. Thus, as a representative of the relative situation of social justice representation in higher education, the discipline of social work is an important indicator.

Summary of Literature Review

The current literature presented here establishes the importance of social justice and equity leadership in education. Current challenges of shifting demographics are global. Historical challenges of shifting demographics due to a multitude of factors are equally presenting challenges, sometimes evolving over long periods. Influencing factors such as race, ethnicity, and culture join in the diversity landscape by emerging factors such as gender role orientations and other components of individual expression and civil liberties. Resolved challenges such as apartheid bring forth trials as societies struggle to produce a new order. Shifts in democratic perspectives from liberal to conservative viewpoints present new challenges to hegemony in societies that once appeared stable. Education in most scenarios is a strategy seen by societies with the potential to influence outcomes for greater harmony in diversity with educational leaders at multiple levels working to understand their role in a complex and layered scene.

The understanding of social justice is diverse and somewhat elusive. Research on social justice as a concept is abundant, but the debate on the operational meaning of social justice in educational settings is common. Theoharis' (2007) in seminal work presented work on critical dispositions for understanding and enacting social justice work

for equity. Taking a global/theoretical perspective, a bold, imaginative vision, and embracing a sense of agency to do social justice work are identified as critical to developing agency and capacity for social justice practice. Santamaría (2014), in an emerging ACLT framework, presented capacities for development by stakeholders in education at multiple levels, but significantly leaders.

Developing an understanding and possessing or developing a moral imperative to work with diversity is presented in research outlining preparation for social justice in education and in deciphering the impetus to move from thought to action. Researchers explored the agency, capacities, and dispositions necessary in praxis to integrate social justice work on a continuum of the individual to societal. Most of the studies are qualitative with small sample sizes but significant in laying the groundwork for future research. In reviewing the current literature agreement on beliefs, values, and a moral agenda emerged as significant along with the requirement for leaders to shift from a traditional to a transformative leadership style. Understanding of self in context to one's own identity is important in individual positioning for social justice and equity work. Expanding the diversity of identities in leadership, along with connecting the network of identities in various leadership roles, emerges as an important strategy in implementing social justice and educational equity.

My extensive search for articles with a focus on the understanding of social justice and educational equity in higher education yielded few results. Research on social justice and educational equity in K–12 education (Armstrong et al., 2013; Santamaría, 2014; Wang, 2015) is abundant relative to research on the topics in postsecondary. This

reality may reflect that the mission of K–12 education is universal coverage to the public and for societal good. In contrast, higher education is considered meritocratic, based on preferential access to various institutions in the system. While research on social justice and educational equity are emerging about the postsecondary system, it is usually discipline-specific or interdisciplinary and not oriented toward a holistic understanding social justice and educational equity in higher education as a system. Studies related to social justice and educational equity in postsecondary settings concentrate on the activist leader, not on the typical or mainstream leader.

The voices, views, beliefs, and opinions of educational leaders in higher education regarding social justice are not well represented. Issues of access to higher education are emerging as a starting point with some research on system procedures, such as assessment, that may add to diversity or detract. The diversity of identities in higher education and systemic inequalities about leadership are rare, although Santamaría (2014) and associated researchers are emerging in the field (Jayavant, 2016; Santamaría & Gaëtane, 2014). Students educated in K–12 transitioning to higher education experience a difference in emphasis on diversity in higher education versus K–12 presenting a potential mismatch of mission and vision in education. If postsecondary education is equally important to K–12 in shaping societies, then it is imperative to understand social justice and educational equity in that landscape.

A basic qualitative study using an interview approach is useful to understand the leaders' experiences and understanding of social justice and educational equity. In the

next chapter, I discuss the research approach and design to align with the research questions discussed in Chapter 1.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore and analyze mainstream postsecondary leaders' understanding of social justice and educational equity in their leadership positions. In Chapter 3, I describe the methodology for this study by presenting the research design and rationale, the role of the researcher, methodological approach (including the participant selection, the interview approach, and the data analysis plan) issues of trustworthiness and ethical considerations.

Research Design and Rationale

In this basic qualitative study, I explored the understanding and promotion of mainstream postsecondary leaders regarding social justice and educational equity. Qualitative inquiry as a social inquiry focuses on the way individuals interpret and make sense of their experiences (Holloway, 1997). According to Savin-Baden and Major (2013), several approaches are possible related to this type of inquiry, but as the critical aim of this study was the understanding the social reality of individuals, groups, and cultures a basic qualitative approach as described by Merriam and Tisdell (2016) fit with my intent and purpose.

In this qualitative study, I wanted to make sense of the participants' constructed view of their experiences. According to Yin (2011), in assigning meaning to the experiences that are the focus of my study, a researcher should confer with participants by asking questions and inferring meaning from responses. A basic qualitative method is practical, flexible, and applicable (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). With this approach, I was interested in how participants interpreted and made sense of their leadership experiences.

I used semistructured questions in the interviews to enable participants to relate their stories about understanding and promoting social justice and educational equity, their opportunities, and their challenges concerning their leadership roles.

Qualitative research, and in particular interviewing, is consistent with my purpose in understanding how mainstream leaders view and promote social justice and educational equity in their leadership practices through participant description of their experiences. Leader's understanding of social justice and educational equity was explored using semistructured interview questions. about their leadership practice. Through data analysis, I examined participants' understanding of social justice and educational equity concerning their leadership practice and experiences.

Initially, I considered grounded theory for this study, in particular, constructivist grounded theory as developed by Charmaz (2014). Constructivist grounded theory as advanced by Charmaz (2014) assumes that data and theories are not discovered but co-constructed. This approach is useful if participants can clearly describe their experiences. While research on the postsecondary leader is sparse for mainstream leaders who are non-early adopters of social justice and educational equity, I was concerned that participants might not be able to identify experiences in their responses if their background was truly limited. This approach might have left participants searching for responses not framed in their lived experiences.

I considered but did not select phenomenology as an approach for this proposed study but not selected. The use of phenomenology as a research approach concentrates on what several participants who are experiencing the phenomena have in common

(Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). In this study, I sought to explore individual leaders' understanding of social justice and educational equity, however, shared experiences might not mirror individual understanding. While commonalities are important, individual experiences are equally significant in this research. The results of the literature review indicated that social justice and educational equity were not necessarily well understood by individuals not exposed to the concepts in some deliberate manner. It was unclear from recent literature how deeply educational leaders have deliberately considered social justice and educational equity in their leadership practice. Phenomenology may be more appropriate to another study of early or known adopters of social justice and educational equity.

I considered narrative research for this study. In narrative research, the researcher listens to the stories of individuals about a concept or phenomenon (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). Leaders who consider social justice and educational equity in a limited or peripheral manner in their practice may be limited in their stories due to their understanding of social justice and educational equity. The narrative approach is ideal for studies examining the journey from limited awareness to increased awareness of social justice and educational equity but is limited in use for a basic exploration with participants who may display varying levels of awareness

Finally, I considered case study research, but it is difficult to design and obtain research ethics approval at the local participant sites due to the observant nature of the method. While contributing to the body of research, case study research produces an in-depth but somewhat limited understanding due to the number of participants and focus on

a single setting. Basic qualitative study outcomes add to the research by increasing the array of participants' viewpoints upon which to build future research.

I selected participants through purposeful selection by sending an invitation to potential participants on the listservs of deans, directors, and educational administrators in the Western region of Canada. Interviewing as recommended by Merriam and Tisdell (2016) was the best source of data for this study as through interview participants tell their stories. I chose semistructured interviews to provide a focus in alignment with previous research outcome, but to provide the opportunity for participants to tell their stories. I intended, through interviews, to obtain an in-depth perspective of the participants on their understanding and promotion of social justice and educational equity in their postsecondary leadership roles.

Role of the Researcher

As the sole researcher, I recruited participants, collected data, and analyzed the data to identify themes and patterns to answer the research questions. I was the only researcher in the study, therefore I authored all correspondence, interview questions, transcribed data, and analysis. The researcher is key to the qualitative design it is critical to direct the methods of data collection and analysis (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Personal traits, my use and interpretation of language, interviewing experience, and overall communication style contributed to my management of the research process. During self-reflection in my research journal, I focused on my positive orientation towards social justice and educational equity for continued awareness and to decrease bias and considered how this could impact the participant response. There were no known

conflicts of interest. I did not have personal relationships with the participants. Although I work within the regional postsecondary environment, my association with participants was collegial and not in conflict with my role as a researcher.

In qualitative research, the researcher makes an interpretation based on personal knowledge (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). As the sole researcher, data collector, and analyzer for my study, there was a potential for bias. By addressing bias directly, it is possible to reduce it (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). To minimize unintended directionality I approached the interviews with a structured approach. I ensured in my interview process that questions were asked in a similar format, and I used follow up questions to clarify vague responses or extend the answer. During the interview process, I maintained a neutral demeanor and tone, exhibiting appropriate collegiality. I informed the participants of their right of refusal to answer questions during the interview for any reason. I clearly stated the intent and purpose of the interview and ensure them there were no incorrect responses. My dissertation committee reviewed the interview questions in advance to assist in minimizing bias in the questioning.

According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), practices such as engaging in reflexivity through journaling aid in critical self-reflection. I used journaling to reflect on my assumptions and made clarifications on my interpretations as required. I used journaling throughout the interview process and included the reflective details in my data analysis documentation. I protected the privacy of the data using a secure password-protected filing system. I assigned security codes to preserve participant confidentiality

and privacy. For the electronic storage of data, I will keep data in my home for 5 years on a protected hard drive.

I managed bias by keeping a research journal and reflecting on the experiences of the research process. Journaling provided me with an avenue to examine the thoughts and impressions surfacing during interviews which might bias the collection and analysis of the interview data, thus bracketing research bias. As recommended by Chenail (2011) I completed a test run of the interview questions with individuals similar to anticipated participants to identify question ambiguity and determine if there was an adequate range of responses for interpretation (Chenail, 2011). My committee members reviewed a selection of my data to assist in checking biases.

Methodology

This section includes five subsections: setting and participant selection logic, instrumentation, procedures for recruitment and participation, data collection and data analysis. I outline the study design and discuss the strategies I employed to ensure validity and trustworthiness.

Setting and Participant Selection Logic

The research location was the Western region of Canada. I recruited postsecondary leaders from community colleges and institutes in the region. I utilized purposeful sampling to select participants for the study. Purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the researcher wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and thus must select a sample from which the most can be learned (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Patton (2015) contended that the strength of purposeful sampling derives from an

understanding of information-rich cases, learning about issues of central importance to the study. Thus, the recruitment of postsecondary leaders through purposeful sampling was appropriate for this study.

I presented and was approved for recruitment approaches by the Walden University Institutional Research Board (IRB; Approval Number: 10-17-19-0222161) board to recruit participants. Of the two approaches, one approach was approved by the Walden IRB for immediate recruitment use, and one approach was conditional on the approval of my study by Research Ethics Boards of potential participant sites. I initiated recruiting for voluntary participants using the approved Walden IRB approach by contacting Wester region listserv owners for deans, directors, and educational administrators. The listserv owners approved and sent to the listserv members, with interested participants contacting me at my Walden University email address. This approach yielded 15 interested participants from 10 postsecondary community college and institute sites with 11 participants from eight sites following through that interest to become study participants.

The second approach required presentation of the study to the Research Ethics Boards at potential participant institutions and submitting the site approval to Walden University Institutional Research Board (IRB) before commencing site recruitment. After receiving Walden University IRB approval I was to follow site processes and procedures, to recruit participants from the sites. As saturation occurred using the first approach approved by Walden University IRB, the second approach was not required for this study.

In terms of purposeful sampling, inclusion and exclusion criteria are critical in screening voluntary participants. Inclusion criteria are the key components that the researcher is seeking in participants who will fit the alignment of the studies purpose and research questions (Patino & Ferreira, 2018). Conversely, exclusion criteria are distinct as features of the potential study participants who meet the inclusion criteria but present with components that could interfere with the success of the study (Patton, M., 2015).

In terms of inclusion for this study, participant invitations for volunteers extended through electronic forums or group lists inviting all individuals currently in an academic or academic support leadership role, who had occupied an educational leadership role beyond the probationary phase in their employment. The post-probationary period was a measure of success in postsecondary leadership. Formal leadership roles included chairs, coordinators, directors, managers, associate deans or assistant deans, associate or assistant vice presidents, provosts, presidents or chief executive officers or equivalent positions.

As the focus of the study was mainstream postsecondary leaders, participants who had published in the area of social justice or educational equity were considered activist and excluded. Potential participants engaged in committee or group activity with some social justice focus (e.g., multicultural committees) were not excluded. While activities such as committee or group involvement may add to the knowledge of social justice and equity it was only intense research in the field considered as an exclusion for this study. Advanced research is considered contributory to advanced or expert knowledge of social justice, and educational equity, thus excluding the participant from consideration as

mainstream. I excluded possible participants through screening questions in the initial protocol, including recruiting material inquiring about participants' research and publishing specific to social justice and educational equity.

Purposeful sampling yielded sufficient participants meeting the inclusion criteria. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) noted that saturation is the point at which themes, patterns, and concepts repeat, with no new information. Saturation occurred with 11 interviewed participants, as I heard the same things over and over with themes, patterns, and concepts becoming repetitive and enough information collected to answer the research questions.

There is variation in the recommended sample size for qualitative studies when using interviews for data collection. To recognize that data is saturated, the analysis must occur with data collection (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I estimated a minimum sample size of eight participants with a range of eight–15 participants with data saturation supporting the actual number of interviews eventually conducted. According to Patton (2015), it is an acceptable practice in qualitative research to check with the interviewees for more information to enrich or clarify data. As saturation was reached, I did not need to seek additional interviews or follow up interviews with the 11 participants, but I did send the transcripts to review for accuracy and clarity. I received transcripts back from three participants with minor edits to wording or clarifications.

In terms of study conduct, I contacted individuals who responded to my invitation to set up a date, time, and location for the interview. All interviews except one face to face interview were conducted by phone. I sent out the preapproved consent forms that adhered to the ethical standard mandated by Walden University's IRB. I solicited

consent via email with participants indicating approval in an email, before interviews. Before each interview, I reconfirmed consent and asked for permission to digitally record the interview.

I conducted one face to face interview at a private location of the participant's choice. The remainder of the interviews were conducted by phone at a date and time of the participants choosing with me a private setting. I ensured the privacy of the research content by saving the recorded and transcribed data in a secure file on my computer with a backup copy to an external hard drive.

Instrumentation

I used semistructured interview questions for the interviews. The questions, found in the Appendix, are based on the operational definitions of social justice and educational equity used in my study, as well as the literature review, conducted relating to leadership practices. I reviewed and considered questions from other research studies in K–12 and modified them for my study.

In designing questions, attention to using language that most participants understand allows participants to answer in their words (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Literature guides the development of the research questions, but it was important to develop and use open-ended interviewing methods to not lead participants to answers (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Open-ended questions were used to generate as much data as possible about the identity of the participant to allow comparison with the literature in the data analysis phase. Probes followed open-ended questions to capture obvious factors identified in the literature from the perspective of the participant.

The primary questions were ordered to move from knowledge to application in leadership practices. I started with what Rubin & Rubin (2012) call a tour question to have participants talk about their broad activities as an educational leader before asking about their specific promotion of social justice and educational equity. The tour questions intend to open a frame for participants to consider their leadership broadly. Accompanying probes are worded to promote confirmation, clarification, sequence, continuation, elaboration, and credibility.

Procedures for Recruitment and Participation

After I acquired Walden University IRB approval I commenced recruitment with the IRB approved approach. I approached, via email, the listserv owners of Western region deans, directors, and postsecondary administrators groups. I sent the listserv owners the Walden IRB approved invitation, requesting their approval and consent to distribute to listserv members. All contacted listserv owners, except one, who did not reply, circulated that invitation to their listserv members. A reminder email was sent out one additional time for each listserv. Interested participants contacted me directly using an email address for Walden University.

Participants meeting the inclusion criteria received additional information on the study and an electronic invitation and consent form attachment. My contact information was included in the email, asking potential participants to reply to the email to indicate acceptance of participation. Participants willing to undertake the study reviewed and indicate their consent via email approval. Upon receipt of the approval of informed consent, I scheduled the interviews at a mutually convenient time, date, and if required

location. In appreciation for participation, each participant received a $25 gift card after their final interview. Participants who initially expressed an interest, but did not follow up were contacted via email two additional times.

Data Collection

I started the interviews within one week of the consent of the first voluntary participant with the process of recruiting and interviewing participants occurring over an approximately two month period. Interviews were scheduled at participant convenience. Interviews held over the phone except for one participant who preferred a face to face interview. This interview was held in a private location of the participants choosing.

Interviews were digitally recorded for the study. I explained at the beginning of the interview that participants may terminate their participation at any time. Participants were made fully aware of the audio recording in the invitation, reiterated in the consent form, and apprised during the confidentiality information in the interview. During the interview, I was cognizant of both verbal and non-verbal cues of the participants to ensure an appropriate relational rapport. I took field notes during the interview and informed the participants of the note-taking, including confidentiality and privacy information. Pseudonyms were used to protect the identity of any individuals in the study and their institutions.

Debriefing procedures at the end of the interview consisted of reminding participants of the importance of checking their email over the next 14 days to watch for their request to review the interview transcript. The email contained their password-protected transcript file; inquiries about any additional clarifications, or any additional

details they would like to add. Participants were asked to confirm the accuracy of their interview transcript.

For data collection, a primary digital recorder was used with a backup second recorder in the event of technical malfunctions. Participants were informed they could withdraw from the study at any time. I transcribed the recordings for data coding and analysis. All research documents are stored on an external hard drive, in password-protected files, in a locked safe in my residence. After 5 years, manual destruction of all electronic and paper research documents will occur.

Data Analysis Plan

Data analysis commenced at the start of the first interview with a process of constant comparison. Data analysis was an ongoing process and continued until data saturation. I used the latest version NVIVO 11 as qualitative software in data analysis. I imported transcribed documents into NVIVO 11. NVIVO 11 as a tool, assisted me in the process of defining, finding, and marking similar concepts and themes in the data, and then sorting into weighted categories, and eventually into themes and subthemes. NVIVO 11 allowed for efficiency in identifying and managing codes, allowing for the filtering of topics and themes. NVIVO 11's functionality includes methods to track each response and transcript line of interviews to better identify themes and patterns without losing the source of the data.

Continuous analysis of data occurred without predetermined codes. While open coding is considered to be a long process and not as efficient as pre-coding, observations emerge from the data (Rubin & Rubin, 2012), Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014)

promoted the use of pre-coding, also referred to as a *priori coding* in research. In pre-coding, the researcher begins with an initial list of codes drawn from the literature, conceptual framework, research questions, and field notes. The researcher then adds or removes additional codes based on the review of data. The debate on open coding relative to pre-determined codes is whether pre-coding introduces subtle bias, potentially blinding researchers to emergent codes. As this was an exploratory study, I used open coding for the possibility that potentially new themes or concepts would emerge from the data.

To link the research question to the data, interview questions were developed in alignment with the conceptual framework, carefully worded to allow me to listen for the information needed to answer the research questions. NVIVO as a tool allowed source tracking of the data and aided in my research process of recognizing significant themes or patterns in the data, along with the notes taken during the interview and the time and location of note-taking. I kept a researchers' journal, password protected in Microsoft Word. The journal and resultant notes, as part of data collection, were analyzed through open coding. It was important to develop distinctions between organizational categories and substantive or theoretical categories as part of the data analysis process (Maxwell, 2013).

Issues of Trustworthiness

Qualitative research includes five main components for ensuring trustworthiness. The subsections of credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and ethical procedures will be addressed in the study to confirm validity and reliability.

Triangulation, rich descriptions, and clarification of research bias address validity and reliability. Transparent research has the most potential for creating stimulating discussions and universal recommendations (Maxwell, 2013). The research process is described in complete detail with reported data and interpretations considered with my conclusions well-documented and supported.

Credibility

Credibility establishes that elements of a participant's experience were represented accurately (Hoepfl, 1997). The participants' responses were explored to provide an accurate representation of their experience. Analyzing the entire interview transcript gave deeper meaning to the data, influencing the overall results in creating a balanced outcome. I asked the participants to review transcripts for accuracy, further promoting credibility.

Triangulation was limited as data was gathered using one instrument during one interview. Triangulation, while limited, included comparing multiple interviews with my detailed field notes to track information and encounters with each interview participant. The ability of the interviewer in interviewing and the recording of a variety of individuals added to the credibility and made interpretations more representative of the target population (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). Saturation of the data and redundancy also addressed issues of incomplete information. Finally, the opportunity for participants to review interview transcripts before data analysis increased credibility and added to the possibility of rich responses.

Transferability

Transferability is concerned with the extent to which the findings of one study are applied to other situations (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Typically transferability is best determined after data analysis (Savin-Baden, & Major, 2013). It was anticipated that the thick descriptions and transparency in this study adequately described the boundaries for use by future researchers. This research study was a bounded study limited to community colleges and institutes in a western region of Canada. The thick and rich descriptions may be extrapolated by future researchers in their unique situations. As limited research was available on mainstream postsecondary leaders on my topics, this study was expected to be a foundation to explore other aspects in future research. Additionally, outlier data, while handled with care in this study, provided openings to future studies.

Dependability

Consistent data becomes reliable (Maxwell, 2013). Once recorded, the researcher can review the interview as many times as necessary to ensure authentic data. I used a field journal to enhance the reflexivity by confirming self-checking and ensuring I considered alternate data conclusions. As stated prior, all correspondence and recordings between myself and the participant will be kept confidential in a password protected files, on a flash drive, in a safe in my home for 5 years. After 5 years, all material will be manually destroyed

Confirmability

Confirmability indicates the extent to which the research elements determine the findings of the study and not researcher bias (Hoepfl, 1997). I had the data reviewed by my committee to help confirm that my biases as a researcher were bracketed, and not affected by the outcomes of the data. As I transcribed and coded the data, I accurately detailed explanations for how the data are coded and analyzed. My researcher's journal ensures that I reflect on each interview and kept bias bracketed.

Ethical Procedures

Recruitment commenced on approval from the Walden University's institutional review board (IRB). Within the initial recruitment email distribution and follow up emails, I asked participants to review the informed consent form. Participants willing to undertake the study provided consent. All responses indicating consent are kept on file with research data. The consent form was intended to alleviate any concerns the participant might have about the study and provide a resource for additional enquiries into the study if the participant would like to contact Walden University's IRB. The informed consent was approved by Walden University's IRB with approval reference numbers. The purpose of the study, background information, procedures, and voluntary nature of the study, risks and benefits of participating in the study, the thank you gift card, and confidentiality was clearly explained to all participants.

As stated previously, the data will be kept private and confidential. NIVO 11 and MS Word both allow for password protected files and can only be accessed on a secure laptop on a password protected wi-fi system. After transcription and coding of data, the

shredding of paper notes occurred. As previously stated, all files and recordings are stored on a password-protected file on an external storage drive locked in a safe in my home and maintained for 5 years, then deleted.

Summary

Each of the components in Chapter 3 was critical to the study. A basic qualitative design and in particular, interviewing was conducted to study leaders' understandings of social justice and educational equity through participant experiences.

Carefully constructed semistructured interview questions captured the understanding and perceptions of the participants. The formal informed consent process and the framework to guide the data analysis is instrumental to the trustworthiness and overall results of the study.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine how mainstream Canadian postsecondary leaders describe and understand their leadership related to social justice and educational equity. I intended to identify the key factors influencing mainstream leaders' understanding and promotion of social justice and educational equity. Using a basic qualitative study design, my goal was to develop a better understanding of mainstream postsecondary leaders' knowledge and abilities in promoting social justice and educational equity within their leadership role.

The research questions for this study were: (a) How do mainstream postsecondary leaders describe and understand the relevance of social justice and educational equity in their leadership practice? and (b) How do mainstream postsecondary leaders describe and understand their leadership in relation to promoting social justice and educational equity in their leadership practice?

In this chapter, I provide a detailed description of my participant pool, including participant setting and demographics. I described the process of data collection, data analysis, evidence of trustworthiness, and results.

Setting

This study took place in the Western region of Canada, drawing participants from a variety of postsecondary institutions in the region. Participants in this study represented public community colleges, private community colleges, and two technical universities that transformed from community colleges to technical universities under legislation introduced in 2008 by the provincial government of British Columbia, Canada. The

technical universities offer community college programming and undergraduate degrees but stand apart from community colleges and institutes in offering graduate programs.

Demographics

Among the 11 participants, one was a man and 10 were women. I assigned each participant a pseudonym and use those pseudonyms throughout this chapter to better explain the reporting of responses. The variety of post-secondary leaders represented in this study ranged from individuals in program coordinator position to dean, along with one in a registrar's position. The participants represented institutions from all over the Western region of Canada. I asked participants about their roles as leaders in their post-secondary careers. All participants served as postsecondary leaders in the Western region of Canada. One participant recently retired from an Associate Dean position, now serving as a senior leadership consultant for accreditation work and comprehensive reviews and thus met the criteria for inclusion.

Nine of 11 participants started their postsecondary careers as faculty, with one participant who taught as a discipline expert before her career in academic leadership. All participants except one experienced a gradual career trajectory to their present position serving in leadership positions with a gradual increase in responsibility. One participant, Penny, came directly to the role of dean from a faculty position. Experience in postsecondary leadership ranged from 4 to 12 years respectively, with a median of 7 years. Participant demographics and pseudonyms are identified in Table 1.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Participant	Gender	Range of Years of Experience in Post-Secondary Leadership	Leadership Positions Occupied in Post-Secondary (previous to current)	Post-Secondary Leadership Setting	Current Geographic Location
Moore	M	6-10	Registrar	Institute/ community college	Rural
Kate	F	6-10	Program coordinator; interim associate dean	Community college/technical university	Urban
Penny	F	6-10	Dean	Community college	Urban
Valerie	F	6-10	Program coordinator	technical university/ community college	Urban
Giselle	F	6-10	Associate dean; dean	Institute/ community college	Urban
Mina	F	11-15	Program coordinator: Interim associate dean	Community college	Urban
Beatrice	F	6-10	Program Coordinator; Associate dean	Community college	Urban
Dorothy	F	1-5	Coordinator: Associate dean	Community college	Urban
Sophie	F	8	Program coordinator; Dean	Community College	Rural
Jennifer	F	9	Dean; Coordinator	Private College/ Technical University	Urban
Tabitha	F	5	Associate dean	Community college	Urban

Data Collection

The data collection process began by identifying all of the deans' and directors' listservs currently active in the Western region of Canada as well as regional listservs for senior-level administration in postsecondary education. Listserv membership represented

both the region as a whole as well as the breadth of postsecondary disciplines and academic support services.

I contacted the listserv managers or owners for permission to post the invitation to the study. When permission was granted I sent the invitation to the listserv owner or manager and they posted to the listserv. The invitation indicated that all communication was to be directed to me and not the listserv owner and emphasized the voluntary nature of the study. Fifteen individuals interested in participating emailed me at my Walden University email address, with 11 participating and four not following through to interview stage. I emailed all interested participants the consent form, invited them to ask questions and ask to reply to my university email indicating their consent. Once consent was received, I contacted the participant by email to set up interview times. Sufficient participants were recruited to reach saturation using listservs, after one invite for each listserv, thus not requiring additional college campus recruitment.

I scheduled all interviews ahead of time with participants notified that interviews would be conducted and recorded by phone. However, one participant of 11 requested a face-to-face interview, which was arranged in a private setting of their choice. All 11 participants were briefed at the beginning of the interview about the format of the interview, including the taping of the interview, and a reiteration about the use and security precautions for the interview data. All participants were emailed a $25 gift card as a thank you for their time. All interviews were completed in one interview ranging in time from 40 to 90 minutes. I sent each participant their respective transcript for review, with three participants making minor changes in spelling and a few demographic details.

No participant requested content changes to the transcripts. The recruitment and interviewing process took approximately 3 months to send out invitations, recruit participants, and conduct interviews. I reached saturation after approximately nine interviews when no new information occurred within the data. As noted by Rubin and Rubin (2012), this repetition indicates rich thick description, which allowed for generating new themes and fine-grained analysis enhancing transferability in the study.

Data Analysis

I used a data analysis process outlined by Saldana (2016), utilizing computer-assisted data analysis software (CAQDAS) to code all data. After each interview, I transcribed the information within 7 to 14 days into a password-protected Microsoft Word 2016 documents. I sent each interview transcript to the participant for a review. Once all 11 interviews were transcribed and reviewed by participants the interviews were imported into the software program, NVIVO 11 as source documents. I labeled each interview with a unique interview number to be able to trace where the interview originated. I completed the coding process in three phases: initial/open exploratory, detailed coding/categorization, and refinement/final codes.

Saldana (2016) noted that exploratory studies involve an emergent and inductive process. I applied tentative labels in the initial review or first phase. I used holistic coding, using the coding feature of NVIVO 11, as outlined by Saldana to apply a single code to a larger unit of data to capture a sense of the overall contents and possible developing categories. As recommended by Saldana, in this first phase, I read each transcript to grasp basic themes in the data by viewing them whole rather than an initial

line by line analysis or splitting. This method was exploratory or preliminary in approach before more detailed coding and categorization in second cycle coding. Nine nodes emerged from the first coding review representing the overall structure of the data.

In the second phase, I reviewed the transcripts again with a line-by-line analysis. In this phase subcategories of nodes emerged based on a refinement of the nodes in the first cycle of coding. I reviewed phrases and specific words and merged conceptually similar components, along with some components considered marginal to the study. A picture of the categories and themes emerged in second cycle coding. I checked interviews to enhance the consistency of coding, particularly concerning interview questions. Fourteen subthemes emerged, leading to eight themes in total in this second phase of analysis.

The third cycle involved further careful analysis of the interview data, themes, and codes. In this phase, refinement resulted in a final 13 subthemes and five final themes. I discuss five main themes and 13 subthemes in the results relative to their research questions. Table 2 lists each theme and each categorized subtheme with the exclusion of demographics, already reported.

Table 2

Interview Data with Themes and Subthemes by Research Question

Research Question 1: Understanding and Relevance To Role	**Research Question 2: Promotion of Social Justice and Educational Equity in Leadership Role**
Creation of understanding	**Leader awareness**
Described understanding	Reflective use of self
Progression of understanding	System awareness
Orientation toward justice and equity	
	Leader presence
Relevance in leadership role	Leadership capital
Ideals	Translating and using experience
Awareness	
Leadership experience	**Leader in action**
Relational to the role	Leadership persona
	Managing challenges and opportunities

Evidence of Trustworthiness

As outlined in Chapter 3, I upheld credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability of the study in the data collection and analysis process. Rubin and Rubin (2012) recommend linking every result and conclusion to evidence. Using Saldana's (2016) method of coding. I report evidence in the next section of this document and report conclusions in Chapter 5. Dependability was achieved throughout the data collection process, as I kept precise records on participant recruitment and recruitment pool revisions, which included e-mail correspondences and meeting notes. Coding the data in NVIVO 11 ensured that I will always be able to locate the source of the data within the original transcripts located in Microsoft Word 2016.

I kept a research journal to document ongoing reflections during the study, record insights, and identify gaps to add to the confirmability of the study. During transcription, I made notes about the information on the recording that I did not clarify during the

interview. I asked Participants to double-check those portions for accuracy during their review. As noted previously, the content of the transcripts was not changed by participants during their review.

Results

The following research questions guided this study: (a) How do mainstream postsecondary leaders describe and understand the relevance of social justice and educational equity in their leadership practice, and (b) How do mainstream postsecondary leaders describe and understand their leadership in relation to promoting social justice and educational equity in their leadership practice? Both research questions are addressed in Table 3 with their resulting themes and subthemes from the data analysis to guide the discussion that follows.

I assigned two themes and seven subthemes to the first research question. The first theme was the *creation of understanding* with the subthemes: *describing understanding*, *progression of understanding*, and *orientation*. The second theme was *relevance in leadership role* with the subthemes: *ideals*, *awareness*, *experience*, and *relational to the role*. The second research question was assigned three themes and six codes. The first theme was *leader awareness* with the subthemes *reflective use of self* and *system awareness*. The second theme was *leader presence* with the subthemes *leadership capital* and *translating and using experience*. The third theme was *leader in action* with the subthemes: *leadership persona* and *managing challenges and opportunities.*

RQ1: Understanding of Social Justice and Educational Equity

To explore how postsecondary leaders understand social justice and educational equity, I asked participants directly to describe their understandings. I asked participants to describe the evolution of their understanding of both concepts and relevance to their leadership role. Themes from the data presented in Table 2 that address this research question are explained further in the following subthemes: (a) creation of understanding (b) relevance in leadership role.

Theme 1: Creation of understanding. Three subthemes emerged relative to the creation of understanding, namely described understanding, progression of understanding, and orientation.

Described understanding. Leaders expressed their understanding from the place that it occupied in their leadership role and positioning. Participants identified three main understandings related to social justice and educational equity, specifying they were good for all—fairness, distributive, and restorative.

Nine of 11 participants indicated that fairness or being good for all was a component of their understanding of social justice. What constituted fairness varied amongst participants. Mina viewed fairness as "individuals, no matter what their background, their culture, their upbringing … their education… are actually treated fairly." Tabitha expressed her view in terms of being "just and fair and social in terms of society." Other participants viewed fairness through the lens of barriers and access. Kate noted, "social justice [means] to make things more fair because a lot of people have barriers [to overcome]."

Similarly, nine of 11 participants included distributive components in their view of social justice and educational equity. In social justice, distributive refers to the community allocation of physical or human resources in society (Jackson, 2005). Six of nine participants specifically referenced resources, such as money for tuition, rent, and food about inequities or social determinants. Penny, Jennifer, and Valerie identified distributive components from their health care discipline backgrounds relating to inequities faced by clients. Their specific focus was on providing an education based on social justice principles to enable their students and future graduates in addressing social justice principles in their practices. Dorothy, Sophie, and Tabitha referred to distribution in postsecondary education. Their focus related to students' ability to access resources, primarily financial, to engage and continue their education. The unaffordability of education, food, and housing was identified as a barrier producing inequity of access to higher education.

Beatrice presented as predominantly distributive in her perception of social justice and educational equity.

> My view of justice means you have to look inside yourself and you have to demand what is your due and you have to give up what is unearned privilege. And I don't mean you give up…your privilege, but I mean share the spoils, pay your taxes, and lobby for the rights of other people because I have the education and the voice to do that given my privileges. That's what it means.

Dorothy referenced diversity and inequity from a resource perspective of food and housing insecurity as an entry point to her understanding of social justice and educational

equity. She indicated that her university education expanded this perspective increasing her awareness of gender and cultural issues concerning resource distribution.

Two participants identified restorative justice as part of their understanding. Restorative justice is a component of justice but tends to be differentiated from social justice in scholarly literature (Worthington, 2013). Worthington framed restorative justice through forgiveness and reconciliation and a form of justice that bridges the system of jurisprudence and restoration of social healing. Generally, restorative justice relates to the victim of a crime or unjust act meeting with the offender, working to help the offender take responsibility for and not repeat behaviors (Worthington, 2013).

For both Valerie and Moore their understanding of social justice included the restorative aspect as part of their framework for social justice. For Valerie, her understanding is derived from her membership on parent advisory committees in her children's school and discussions relating to behaviors in school resulting in student suspensions versus addressing their actions. Valerie noted similarities to her postsecondary leadership experience in her program coordinator role. Moore's postsecondary position as a registrar places him at a management level of working with students through restorative justice processes.

Progression of understanding. In regard to the second theme, the importance of stories or what is referred to in social justice literature as the storied self was evident in that all participants shared stories when asked about their development of the understanding of social justice and educational equity. The stories revealed four life events shared by many of the participants that tended to shape identities toward the

understanding of social justice and educational equity. Specifically, participants identified the family of origin, formative years' experiences, experiences with or in forming their adult family or adult development, and experiences in their professional discipline.

Four of nine participants shared significant stories about their family of origin in shaping their identities toward social justice and educational equity based on their experiences in their families of origin. Four participants, Beatrice, Sophie, Dorothy, and Valerie shared stories about the influence of their families on shaping their identities and. Beatrice noted that her mother was a social worker who impressed upon her children an ethic of 'we have a lot and it's our job to give back.' Beatrice commented that both she and her sister are inclined toward "giving back" as a family value to serve the "greater society." Sophie identified social justice as a value her family held, although not labelled as social justice by the family. Volunteer work, an open door to others, caring for relatives and community members, and a sense of something bigger than self were identified by Sophie as a product of her family upbringing. Dorothy stated, "I suppose my understanding of social justice comes from growing up in a union family…I was attending rallies as a kid, I was attending political events as a child." Valerie emphasized, "I was raised in a strong Indian background and you knew right from wrong and if you did wrong there was consequences."

Kate stated directly that she is Cree-Metis, but did not draw a direct link to her culture with social justice and educational equity in her statements. However, it was in her professional work with indigenous communities, and her master's thesis on plants in

the playgrounds, that her cultural background was an implicit influence. Kate's statements gave a matter of fact sense that this is who she is with no elaborate explanation to further define or defend that reality.

The experience and values derived in the family of origin overlap with formative years' experience, with five participants identifying specific influential moments in their formative years. Moore referenced as significant his youth with the enjoyment of skate punk and similar punk music which "has a lot of lyrics that revolve around social justice and rebellion and whatnot." Valerie attributed formation or understanding of educational equity relative to her United Kingdom and Canadian school experience. Valerie related that as a child she experienced the United Kingdom school system, a hierarchical system she now considers "Eurocentric," a system that streams students early on in their education into a pathway. In contrast, Valerie's experience with Canadian experience reshaped her perspective on equity as Canadian education has multiple access and exit points dependent on an individual's changing goals and development. Penny described her move from Montreal to Winnipeg in her teens as being significant. She described her perceptions shifting from believing that every person had an equal chance.

> I came to an understanding of the challenges that people face. And that not everybody can go to school. Not everybody can afford post-secondary education. And then I had the opportunity to work with Indigenous youth in inner-city programs and really came to a better understanding of residential schools. And poverty and entrenched poverty and it really shook my world.

Three of eleven participants, Valerie, Giselle, and Beatrice, indicated a strong relationship between their perspectives on social justice and experiences their families formed through marriage or partnerships. Valerie found her experiences with her children in their early school years influenced her perspectives on social justice and educational equity. Valerie referenced her experience with her children's school program advisory committees as informative in terms of experiencing diverse communities and perspectives. In particular, differences of opinions, and in particular negative opinions from other parents on the integration of children with special needs into regular classroom programming, influenced her understanding and perspectives on social justice and educational equity which carried into her postsecondary leadership.

For Giselle, her significant moment related to an incident for her husband where a young female hairstylist was cutting his hair and expressing her perspective that the enemy of the "world is White males." For both Giselle and her husband, this moment precipitated an intense study of current issues and an interest in social justice. Giselle expressed a perspective of interest groups in society advancing an "us and them perspective" which Giselle perceives is in contrast to the roots of social justice as a humanistic and holistic movement derived from Marxism and in particular free speech.

Beatrice presented a relatively intricate perspective. Identifying as a feminist and gay, she undertook graduate studies inclusive of social justice and presents as a social justice advocate. Within her adult forming family Beatrice noted a few examples contributing to her progression of understanding. She and her first wife had been

"litigants for same-sex marriage" 15 years prior. Like Valerie, Beatrice's experiences with her children in school influenced perception. She stated:

> So it's very hard to remember what you don't know when you have had a lifetime of being rewarded for what you know. Last night was student teacher night at my kid's high school and he is just starting. So I went with my kid who is you know White and male and bright and I saw the praise that was heaped on him by every single teacher and I thought yeh, that was my experience and how different is that from the experience of our kids that come here [her institution] from [foster] care.

All participants described to some degree the influence of their professional discipline on their progression of understanding. Seven of 11 participants are members of disciplines related to health care. Of those, Jennifer and Penny identified elements related to social determinants of health and equity as significant to their perspectives. Jennifer stated, "I look at it from a mental health perspective because I have been in the business for 27 years." Penny whose background is in public health shifted from a lifestyle focus of health to an environment that supports equity. She stated, "I came to realize that by addressing inequities and by ensuring access to every person to…a healthy economic situation, a living wage, housing, health services, dental services … we would create healthier communities and a healthier population."

Jennifer translated her experiences into the postsecondary setting as a faculty member and then to curriculum inclusion with the centering of the concepts in course work with students as the benefactors. Jennifer stated:

> so my awareness is much more poignant [as] I grew, [to] how I see this from an educational perspective. Realizing that basically if we do not teach our students now about it they are not going to be able to go into practice and understand how to do it.

Mina, Tabitha, Valerie, Sophie, and Giselle all rooted their understanding within their postsecondary experiences of students and education drawing from their discipline background utilizing other factors in their progression decisions about students. Mina discussed the value of being an advocate for students and broaden perspectives beyond "what it took to be a good psych nurse."

Tabitha in discussing a student in a licensed practical nursing program (LPN) elaborated:

> And so, for instance, in our practical nursing program, if the pass is 70% and they come up with a 68%, I will talk to the instructor and ask them "what's their attitude?" I will meet with the student. And consult with the instructors. Usually, they are in favor of allowing the student to move on, and we put learning plans in place to help and support them, and milestones to monitoring to make sure they are staying on track to lead to success. So those kinds of things, waivers, can happen in programs not just in admission.

Sophie also discussed the process of using waivers and exceptions to promote students when the conditions were set up for success.

Valerie noted the presumptions that sometimes occur in the professions about the right way to practice and challenge those assumptions. Valerie's example of presumptions about a dental hygiene student illustrates this point:

> There was a student in our dental hygiene program and she wanted to practice ambidextrously because she was ambidextrous and the faculty were like "no she has to pick a hand because it's unsafe, and it's going to be that and I really had to say to them, "you know she is learning a very psychomotor skill and who are we to preclude that she can't do that with both hands?" And this can be a study of sorts and certainly if she is faltering behind, I said: "what [is] the harm in letting her do that"?

Valerie noted that in her experience it was often assumptions not necessarily based on evidence that influenced these decisions and produced barriers to both social justice and educational equity.

Giselle presented a different frame on professional discipline, social justice and educational equity. In discussing educational equity Giselle reported she believes in equal opportunity for access, but not equal outcomes which she perceives lead "to mediocrity and waters down what are our standards of education and our degree-granting status and what we can do." Giselle stated that equity of outcomes was not a feasibility practice and left reputational harm to the institution.

Kate indicated that she had not spent time thinking about her definition of social justice. As an educator and a leader, her Cree-Metis heritage presented as part of her story and an overall seamless picture of her as a leader in postsecondary education.

Similarly, her field of early childhood education appeared integrated into her overall value structure. While she professed to not think about her definition of social justice and educational equity, she presented a picture of solid integration of the principles both as a leader and a professional. Kate stated, "I am very, very, focused on children and I work a lot with an aboriginal Head Start which is a family-focused program based on overcoming barriers…I work a lot with indigenous groups…um and a lot of it is about helping people see their abilities and see they can succeed."

In addition to professional discipline, as postsecondary leaders, the education of participants relative to social justice and educational equity is of note. Of the 11 participants, Beatrice was the only participant with a formal scholarly background in her graduate work that included both a theoretical and applied perspective on social justice and educational equity. Moore participated in his review and professional development related to restorative justice. Seven of 11 participants indicated a peripheral education in social justice acquired through their disciplinary backgrounds in bits and pieces. Dorothy indicated the educational influence of a postsecondary leader with a scholarly interest in social justice that provided her educational framework. Giselle's education occurred through her own directed reading with some influence in terms of a similar viewpoint of her current institutional president. Except for Beatrice, no participant undertook formal education about social justice and equity practices.

Orientation toward justice and equity. Overall orientation toward social justice and educational equity emerged from participants' answers as the third subtheme. All participants in this study primarily viewed social justice and educational equity from a

positive stance. One participant, Giselle, provided a different perspective in orientation from other participants. Giselle while not negative, viewed the origins of social justice as "good and fair" with a stated discomfort that social justice now represented a move away from the original intent toward "interest groups and identity politics."

Four types of orientation appeared significant: stakeholder, participatory, multi-focused, and technical. As a primary orientation, nine of 11 participants displayed a primary preference for stakeholder, one of eleven for participatory, and one for multi-focused. As a secondary orientation six of 11 responses appeared participatory, one multi-focused, and two technical.

Stakeholder appeared as the most common primary orientation with nine of 11 participants oriented toward stakeholders. All nine identified stakeholders as primarily students, although Sophie viewed students and community partners equally. For most participants, it was the identification of one or two main concerns or issues emerging relative to stakeholders, which informed the direction of their orientation. Penny identified the development of universal design as her primary stakeholder focus relative to social justice and educational equity. Referencing her public health background and her role as dean, Penny stated, "how do we better support students? In many cases it's a dean issue; you are making exceptions for certain students."

Beatrice identified her primary interest in social justice and educational equity as indigenization. Beatrice identified:

> as an educational administrator in this time and place, I still have so much to learn about what indigenization means and decolonization means. I feel like that's

> where my energy is going as an educator in this college in this place right now because it's what my students are really needing.

Tabitha's orientation for social justice and educational equity focused on access, student success, and barrier reduction for students. She stated:

> in the last couple of years, I have realized that my role is part of the student success team and I frame that way when I talk to people. And so, if we are getting students in, we also I believe have an obligation to help them or monitor them to be sure that we haven't done so selfishly.

The second orientation type, participatory, identified as primary for Mina and secondary for Jennifer, Tabitha, Penny, Valerie, Kate, and Sophie. A participatory orientation reflected a shared societal responsibility for social justice and educational equity. This orientation tended to be the most ideological and broadest in the description. Mina, describing herself as an idealist, stated:

> I remember when I was doing my master's and my masters was around diversity, my thesis was around diversity and my profs at the time sort of said that "your vision is absolutely impossible. You can't expect every individual to have the same rights, to have the same opportunities, you know, it's nice to say that there is fairness and equality but that's almost impossible". It was, it's a struggle, and I've had you know in any of my roles I really believe in people being treated fairly.

The third orientation, multi-focused, was the primary and only orientation for Gisele and a second orientation for Beatrice. These participants tended to view social

justice from many different angles and while not researchers in social justice and educational equity they tended to be well-read and well informed based on scholarly reading or experiences. Giselle described herself as having "read very widely and deeply on this" concerning social justice. Giselle described a range of reading and research aligning with the original intent of social justice in particular, as well as work by social conservative scholars Jordan Peterson, Douglas Murray, and Thomas Sowell. Giselle expressed a concern "I am just not sure I understand." This statement for Giselle appeared to reflect that her perspective of social justice differed from a view of the marginalization of some groups in society and education toward a concern for politicized ideology.

Beatrice, while primarily stakeholder-oriented, described a multi-focused understanding. Beatrice described her PhD dissertation as "moral development from a social justice point of view [with a] feminist standpoint theory." While describing arriving in her current geographic location in the early '90s she stated:

> I fell in with a cohort of people that were very different from the people I grew up with… they were older than me by about 10 years so I was in my middle-late 20s and they were in their middle-late 30s and they introduced me to an awareness of social justice that has stayed with me…I was reading that stuff and really living it.

Two of 11 described a technical orientation in their understanding which related to an orientation to tasks, procedures, policies or data. No participant identified this as a primary orientation, with Moore and Dorothy expressing some technical aspects in their secondary orientations. Moore, while primarily stakeholder-oriented expressed a

technical orientation in describing the use of policy as a part of his understanding of social justice and educational equity management concerning his postsecondary role. Moore indicated an orientation toward using policy for streamlining decisions by using policy and procedures to address 80% of concerns routinely handled by front line staff, leaving 20% of the more complex issues to be dealt with individually. Dorothy identified an interest in using data to identify barriers to success or graduation rate success in relation to educational equity. She stated she thought "the key point about educational equity is finding out why these students are dropping out. Why do they leave and why are they not successful?"

Theme 2: Relevance to leadership role. Participants were directly asked about the relevance of social justice and educational equity to their leadership role and to provide examples of relevance, which emerged as the second theme in relation to the first RQ. Ideals, awareness, experience, and role relationship emerged as subthemes.

Ideals. Ideals held by individual participants linked with their perspectives on the relevance of social justice and educational equity to their role. All participants talked about their ideals often through values or beliefs about social justice and educational equity. Beatrice directly identified a moral and ethical component starting with childhood values, evolving during university studies and work life. Beatrice noted, "I was raised with an ethic of we have a lot and it's our job to give back. "

Sophie expressed values related to openness, trust, honesty, and role relationship. When Sophie started her role as dean she compared it to a partnership and committing to a relationship. She stated:

> like I was scared to death sometimes…but I know who my people are at the college that I can rely on and who I can trust. And I knew that… being open and honest and like willing to learn… that I was going to reap that from the nation as well.

Jennifer described her impetus as a passion to do right:

> I worked at a particular hospital [where] everything was locked up. Food was locked up, the patients' room in a locked unit with no nurses that would interact with them unless they went through the door. So, what you see is almost these caged animals walking around. They don't have access to coffee, they don't have access to food, they don't have access to anything ….everything is locked. And to me, that's how I was able to talk to my students about that and I said that creates a caged animal, it also creates islands, it also creates inequality for these people who are one of the most vulnerable populations that we care for.

Awareness. Individual and global awareness of factors relating to social justice were important in associating social justice and education equity with participants' leadership role. Participants generally acknowledged the complexity of factors in considering social justice and educational equity in their role. Moore noted discussions in his institution around social justice, specifically how will social justice impact faculty, and how faculty understanding impact students. In describing the process of faculty understanding social justice related to student incidents Moore described the "mental gymnastics" of faculty shifting their viewpoints in collaborative teams toward social

justice. Some team members expressed surprise that individuals shifted their views in a more positive social justice orientation through a team process.

Dorothy who previously worked in the United States and now in Canada described in her answers an increasing awareness of broad cultural and racial issues. Dorothy's previous postsecondary role in New York impacted her experience and values with experiential knowledge of working with students who predominantly identified with Black and Hispanic cultures. Dorothy's background differed from other participants in that her primary background fell within performing arts instead of the health field, but she demonstrated an awareness of social and health inequities in particular from her work in the United States, attributing this awareness to collegial relationships with other leaders and faculty researching in health and educational fields, along with the experience of her students. Dorothy noted a strong value for her in education as a change agent in the lives of historically oppressed individuals.

Global or broader awareness appeared to bring the relevance of social justice and educational equity to the forefront influenced by an institutional increase in international students. In particular, the impact on their role related to the shift in perception of others in their institution and thus an impact on their role and leadership. While international students always made up a portion of enrollments, for some institutions, like Tabitha's, a sudden increase in enrollment occurring approximately 3 years ago produced significant changes in organizational culture and adaptations. Tabitha indicated that sudden influx was a challenge and that planning to accommodate the influx was not ideal. Faculty and others expressing concern that international students were replacing domestic students

and English as a second language and understanding of culture relative to education all brought challenges to leadership roles. Issues of social justice and educational equity became overtly relevant to Tabitha within her leadership role as she managed frequent concerns or complaints from faculty and colleagues. Tabitha stated, "it put the work of the institution in a little bit of a tailspin for a little while to just support the influx…to support the students."

Sophie noted a similar experience at her institution, although international growth was moderate. Sophie commented on the struggle for faculty as they adjusted to a new student demographic. Sophie commented:

> And that's what I really saw was our international students coming in, is that our faculty didn't have a clue how ... Most of them had no, like, lived experience with or personal experience with either or the country of origin that those students were coming from or with um even being outside of you know Canada or often the North American continent… a lot of them was like going to an all-inclusive resort in Mexico… or on a golfing holiday or something like that or down to Arizona. They just didn't have any reference point for them to even think about, you know... like academic dishonesty not as …like cheating and lying and you know the kinds of things, the labels we tend to put on that.

Sophie expressed an increased awareness and a concern about the impact of dominant groups educating marginalized groups.

Leadership experience. The level of participant experience with leadership in a postsecondary role influenced the perception of role relevance related to social justice

and educational equity. Participants talked about relevance concerning their role experience and ability to act in situations for social justice and educational equity. The ability to act in relation to their role expanded with the length of time in both leadership and position.

For a number of the participants their experience and ability to do things differently or creatively linked to relevance. Moore described it as "maturing" in his role. Sophie and Tabitha noted an increased ability in their roles to assess student situations individually and admit students with alternate admission criteria and set up plans for student success. Sophie stated, "I have much more ability to make decisions about to offer students those opportunities and to start to dismantle some of those structures that created inequities of injustice so then I did as a chair."

Mina noted the shift for her in relevance in moving from being a new leader to a more experienced leader. Mina captured the shift in relevance as she increased in comfort in her role:

> I think when you are new into a leadership role you tend to move a little bit away from thinking about fairness because you are concentrating so heavily on thinking about following policies and not screwing up basically that sometimes you forget about the sort of the fairness or the equality for everyone. That's why I said a bit earlier I found myself a bit challenged with how I usually work around thinking about what's fair for everyone because of the fact you have so much responsibility you fall back on what's always been done. It's a little bit harder to challenge the status quo when ah you feel the weight of responsibility. But I think

> absolutely (emphasis) that it's part of this role and with comfort, understanding and being able to articulate and having a good argument if you will or a good you know, a good back background…no not a background. Being able to articulate the importance of looking at fairness, equality for everybody. I think with comfort in that role it becomes easier to do.

Relational to the role. In addition to experience, participants tended to express the relevance of social justice and educational equity concerning how viewed their formal and informal authority in their role. In particular, participants described their role in relevance and managing of opportunities and challenges associated with social justice and educational equity.

Mina described the shift in role from faculty program coordinator to an associate dean:

> realized that after being in an associate dean position that as a program coordinator it was truly middle management. I had the ability to make some decisions… but it wasn't truly middle management position. When you wanted to do something you didn't have the ultimate decision making power. You did, you had a good piece of it, but as interim associate dean, you did have a little more of that authority, making decisions, helping people make decisions.

Mina remarked how the shift in role allowed her to make the decisions about social justice and equity challenges, but also mindful of ensuring that faculty understood those decisions.

Tabitha described her role as associate dean, social justice, and educational equity in terms of the role authority to make admissions decisions. In particular, Tabitha talked about using waivers for admission in non-competitive programs. Tabitha discussed granting waivers while adhering to principles: "my philosophy in terms of waiving is that somebody who doesn't meet the requirements and needs a waiver can't supersede somebody who meets the requirements."

Kate highlighted the informal and formal components of being relational to the role in understanding and promoting values. Kate stated:

> Yeh, I promote it because we do talk about things, how do we support students from different backgrounds, how do we assure that we um uh…keep all of students in a cohesive group…because we have international students, domestic students, indigenous students, we have a wide variety of ages in our program, a wide variety of backgrounds. So we have to look at making sure how we are a really cohesive group. I mean listen to everybody's point of view,

Kate in her formal role, similar to Mina and Tabitha, talked about making decisions on exceptions for students that led to student success.

Valerie, who was in a faculty coordinator role provided several examples of informal leadership in social justice and equity. Valerie recounted conversations with faculty in her coordinator role:

> I have had some where you know where faculty are not even open to even discussing the issues…up to…and that's where it's the hardest because what you are trying to do is engage in conversation. Usually, I try to make it so it's not

> personal about you think this and I think this …it's about putting the issue on the board and like ok …let's think about this is not successful is…let's write these tangibles down here and what is the reason why the student is…what are the things the student does do well. Like making it not personal.

Valerie expressed frustration at times when her role did not provide the authority to change the decision. Valerie provided an example of a frustrating outcome:

> it was a student with English as a second language that needed extra time and didn't have a documented disability. Needed to read it, needed to flip it into her own language, master it and then flip it back…she wasn't a star student but … beautiful in clinic with her patients, with her manner and her caring and things. …there is policy that if it's a final exam it's three hours and that's all they get. And despite saying what's it going to cost us to give her more time? I was not successful in getting her more …so she struggled through the program. Made it through first semester but did not make it through second. I still think that was a social injustice because it did not measure what she knew it was measuring her ability to the speed to translate and to translate it back.

Most participants who moved from unionized faculty to union excluded leadership roles expressed freedom in being able to use their role to make some decisions for social justice and equity. All participants understood their values and promoted those values in all roles, but the formal ability to make some decisions in the best interests of the student, keeping faculty in the loop, was presented as positive.

RQ2: Leadership and Promotion of Social Justice and Educational Equity

To understand how post-secondary leaders promote social justice, I asked participants about a time they perceived they promoted social justice and educational equity successfully and a time they felt their promotion was unsuccessful. Themes from the data (see Table 3) that address this research question are explained further in the following themes: leader awareness, leader presence, and leader in action.

Theme I: Leader awareness. Two subthemes emerged relative to leader awareness namely reflective use of self and system awareness.

Reflective use of self. In the reflective use of self, participants identified their awareness of self and tendencies to act in a certain way in certain situations, and an ability to use self to work together with others, and an ability to understand what they could and could not control in their actions.

Participants when describing their successes in promotion identified traits which influenced their ability to act. Participants' reflections about themselves concerning social justice and educational demonstrated an ability to know themselves and find the opportunities for promotion. All participants provided examples that indicate an ability to identify a gap in social justice or educational equity. Mina in talked about success in promoting a field experience. Mina's intended success was to have a broader range of student, not only the academically elite, participate in the program. Mina identified in herself a tendency to push stating "I guess I had the label, or people had the perspective that I push these things onto faculty."

Beatrice described her success in revising an aboriginal admissions stream program. Like Mina, Beatrice used words that indicated a disposition to push or move things forward. Beatrice noted "I took that on" and "was really committed." Beatrice also identified a tendency to push forward and place herself into new and uncomfortable situations. Beatrice described attending an indigenous community meeting where she was the only non-indigenous person and the feeling of being the minority.

Giselle talked about a success earlier in her career where she was supporting an indigenous practice of her clients in a health care unit. Giselle used words like "challenge" and "push" to describe her effort to make the situation just for her clients. Likewise, Tabitha identified for her success a scenario of two students academically at risk who she took on to provide an alternate path to success. In her description, Tabitha noted "responsibility," but also noted an ability to assess the situation to ascertain the risk balance.

In participants' descriptions, these examples demonstrated an awareness of who they were and how their personality traits would be effective inside the group. Mina identified that she was known to push or advocate as an aspect of who she was and in the collegial group it was a balance of using that ability to effect action and not produce negative consequences or inaction. Giselle's example was similar in that she was promoting action for clients in direct contradiction to the procedure but in recognition of a cultural norm for the client. Navigating her ability to advocate within the workplace required an understanding of the facets of the workplace that were "pushable."

Tabitha's example was slightly different in that in her example she identified a capacity to promote social justice based on her role as associate dean. Tabitha indicated a need to navigate the outcome of her promotion decision with faculty who were not necessarily on board with alternate pathways for students in the initial phases. Tabitha acknowledged "there's the backlash from in the negative outcome of staff being, um, upset with you."

Participants identified resilience in how they approached situations where the promotion of social justice and educational equity did not go as planned. Beatrice stated "the workload is crushing. I am only in this job because I grow so much from the challenges." Moore discussed an at-risk student situation that did not succeed and noted:

> I think that the efforts that we make or the efforts that we can make and if the student chooses to engage that is really on them at that point…we provide the mechanism to for them to learn or have the learning experience through their behavior.

Similarly, Mina identified a student situation where she advocated for the student to have an additional chance which did not work out for student success. In this particular instance, the student and family became aggressive in the situation. Mina stated, "it scared me a little bit because of the fact I promoted that and then I don't know…it was early on in my career." From a self-reflective perspective while acknowledging mistakes made in the situation Mina noted that in her later role as Associate Dean she learned to put checks and balances into place to support the decisions made.

***System awareness*.** Most participants discussed at a system-level some resistance on the part of the organizational culture in efforts to promote social justice and educational equity. Six participants identified organizational resistance in reference to colleagues or discipline components.

Sophie who aligns social justice and educational equity with indigenization as one of her priorities, noted: "I think some faculty in that program feel that they have indigenized the curriculum if they have done a couple of workshops or something." Jennifer provided an example of collegial reaction to a homeless shelter close to the institution and perception by fellow administrators in a campus development meeting "it was all about them stealing, you know wrecking their some of the ecological stuff at they have been building…all about them versus us." Tabitha noted that she worked with a great group of chairs and coordinators but emphasized on an ongoing basis in her role this group that "we aren't the gatekeepers of the profession and that education is a right." Tabitha noted a bit of a divide for her programs in that most were open access but some were competitive entry and that it was difficult to maintain community college ideals of access with the element of scholarship and prestige programming.

Jennifer's leadership experience in private and public institutions along with a focus on social justice and educational equity from a mental health lens expressed a few different observations to other participants. In terms of her private institution experience, Jennifer expressed "all day long all I did was put out fires. As a leader, I didn't have that opportunity to um teach my faculty how to incorporate social justice in and it was sort of just intuitively talked about it." From a system perspective, Jennifer's

view indicated that social justice and educational equity are promoted most effectively through inclusion in the curriculum. Jennifer viewed work with students as the pathway to the future progression of social justice and educational equity.

Moore noted the challenges of the system in maintaining the long-term view. As he pointed out "the successes happen over time and the failures happen instantaneously… really, really short. Your failures happen right in front of you and your successes happen a year and a half or more out." Moore expressed a need for constant reframing and reselling.

In talking about the institution as system participants identified governance, policy, and procedure as important to facilitating or hindering social justice and equity. Moore, in discussing his institution specifically identified policy and policy development as a facilitator of social justice and educational equity leadership. Moore described a collegial environment in his institution in that he leads a lot of policy development within his role. Moore sees "a lot of contribution from staff and people around the campus….they show up to meetings….there are often discussions around social justice. How will it impact faculty, how will it impact students?"

Senior college leadership was noted by a few participants as critical to their promotion of social justice and educational equity. Dorothy noted the presence of a college president as a strong social justice advocate and the positive promotion within the institution based on that leadership. Moore expressed concern that when his president a strong social justice advocate, eventually left the institution if a new college president would change directions in justice and equity for the college. Moore noted a "constant

reframing, reselling, you know providing literature for the executive team, providing literature whatever crosses my desk. I always try to provide summaries to the executive of why this is important."

Similarly, Giselle talked about senior-level leadership support as important. Giselle noted that her college president advocated for a diversity of ideas around social justice and educational equity. Like Moore, Giselle noted that she provided "research articles done by clinical psychologists about how people exercise power by using this notion of moral grandstanding." The fit of leaders' beliefs and values within the institution to the culture of the institution presented as significant for most participants.

Theme 2: Leader presence. The presence of the participant as a leader emerged as important in the leader's ability to promote social justice and educational equity. Leadership capital and translating and using experience emerged as subthemes concerning presence. Presence appeared to relate to the participants' ability to develop relations and to support, identify, and develop allies in their institutions. Translation and using experience fit with participants' perspective on how to leverage themselves within their role in the institution.

Leadership capital. The code leadership capital emerged as participants talked about their successes in the promotion of social justice and educational equity along with the knowledge, skills, and abilities they considered essential to promotion. This question produced for many participants the strongest connection between themselves and their understanding and promotion of social justice and educational equity.

Specific traits indicating presence were identified by participants. Relational traits were common amongst participants. Penny identified that "listening is number one….then by listening being willing to change and to be flexible. Valerie emphasized, "that you have to be real to people that are around you and authentic because that gets people to listen." Moore identified that "the first one that popped into his head was curiosity," associated with being open to the life circumstances of students along with an openness to look at circumstances in different ways. Dorothy identified empathy and knowledge of institutional history and politics along with the relational aspect of telling a compelling story to transmit presence and values.

From a support stance, Mina identified "like-minded individuals in a group" when she is promoting new or difficult concepts along with speaking up and not being easily swayed. Giselle identified a similar stance in terms of finding others within her institution who shared her values, thus widening the support network. Beatrice spoke from the perspective of confidence and support:

> it's confidence with humility that's the trick. You have to be confident enough to stand up to the people with power and you have to be humble enough to not bulldoze people who have less power. And be prepared to laugh at yourself. It's like learning languages, right? You never learn another language unless you risk and make mistakes.

From an ally perspective, Sophie provided an encompassing perspective: "it's an ability to understand where your knowledge, skills, and abilities lie and to form

relationships with people who can bring their knowledge, skills and abilities to the table. So I think it's about being honest with who you are."

Tabitha stated:

> I would probably say I am the most Christian non-religious person you will you ever meet…I have always held …I've always seen life through a social justice lens. I think knowledge is important but it's not enough, because if somebody does not fundamentally believe providing them with knowledge and information is not going to help.

Translating and using experience. Participants talked about their traits and presence concerning eventual action. Sophie who identified what knowledge, skills, and abilities she brings to the table that extended into translation:

> I think it's about either accepting a seat at the table or being willing to work in partnership with others and to really leverage those strengths that everybody brings or that you invite people to the table to help support the work that you need to do and really recognize the skills and abilities and knowledge that other people bring.

Kate noted an openness to differences of opinion as a discussion point and not an attack on personal beliefs.

Valerie pointed out that for her it was "coming from you if you live it and emulate it" and shared an example:

> you know I was a terrible math student but boy was I ever relational. I was not stupid, but I needed some guidance and help and in the British system: it's 'know

> your timetables and know this.' I think an authentic leader values it and comes from that perspective. You are bringing your lens there and people listen to it; I think that's the first step in anything…so people consider and go 'I never thought about that before.' So being able to relate to situations and also the people that are around the table with you, so you can find the common ground. Then be able to move forward in some capacity, if at all. I think sometimes it doesn't work but social justice is a way of being now. So, I think I would take it as something I wear everywhere I go and those are the questions that I would ask and the lens [through] which I will consider a situation.

Giselle's understanding of social justice and educational equity resonates with its humanist origins and a perspective that the current state of social justice and educational equity is somewhat politicized stated:

> I think part of it is not being afraid of speaking to a truth…I think that often people freeze when they should act. [They should] educate into [the situation and] spread good ideas…it takes a pretty fearless leader to do that. And I think that often you know….in public institutions like this, I mean [for] every time someone steps up and speaks their truth we've got many, many, many sorts of times we have seen they have been taken down, or taken out. So, it takes a lot of personal fortitude to step forward and speak the truth and be heard in a respectful, educative fashion.

Mina moved to translation to action:

> …by looking for people that think the same and have a different view. So, I try very hard to do it in a group setting. When I am sitting with a team I try very hard to bring forward, um, literature, or to bring forward concepts to try … [to] point out and advocate you know and so I think that has been the biggest challenge and kind of sadness for me as well.

Theme 3: Leader in action. Participants' answers to the range of questions revealed the theme of the leader in action. Leadership persona and managing challenges and opportunities arose as subthemes.

Leadership persona. Two leadership persona's emerged, namely erosion and pushing through. Participants tended to lead somewhere along the continuum of these two persona's, tending to one main persona, but adapting style depending on the context of the situation.

The predominant persona for participants was erosion, evident in nine of the 11 participants' interviews. Erosion in this context exemplifies value-driven leaders who role model or walk the talk, dropping nuggets of their values into their leadership in action. This approach, in contrast, is more subtle than the pushing through a style which demonstrated as a more in your face advocacy, being assertive about values in the promotion, although not necessarily aggressive. Both styles were described as effective for participants with a match between leaders' persona and their expression of self-awareness.

Moore, Beatrice, Dorothy, Kate, and Tabitha tended to the erosion leadership side of the continuum. Penny, Valerie, Sophie and Jennifer's style was predominately

erosion, but also a moderate amount of pushing characteristics dependent on situational context. Two participants, Giselle and Mina, tended to the pushing side of the continuum with an overlay of erosion in their leadership styles.

Beatrice and Moore both tended to be able to draw on a scholarly and research perspective as their overarching framework. Beatrice, in contrast to all participants, demonstrated an educational and career path grounded in a scholarly understanding of social justice and educational equity. Beatrice is quite clear that as an individual and in her leadership style she "looks inside herself. " Decolonization, indigenization, and gender identity and equity are important areas of advocacy for Beatrice. Beatrice stated, "as a leader, you have to be able to go down into the weeds, but you also be able to come up and see the horizon and remember where you're really headed." Beatrice acknowledged the long view. While Beatrice describes herself as "bull-headed" her approach emerged as an influence by being subtle and persistent. Beatrice stated:

> so this is a big piece of my own professional learning. How to sit back, how to maybe take somebody out for a coffee, and have a little chitty chat with them about how they should see it my way. Frame things to my boss in ways that are comprehensible to them. That helps them see how my agenda actually does fit their agenda. They may just need to see it my way. Right? Framing things in more subtle ways. Working I guess the back room a little bit better.

While Beatrice framed this as something she was learning to do, her stories indicated a level of expertise at erosion.

Moore's work positioned him early on in a justice and equity framework although a large component of the frame fell into restorative justice. Moore characterized his work from a "rebel standpoint," but his examples presented a strong core of values that are well integrated and define him as a leader. In his position Moore presented as what you see is what you get, a leader with a strong sense of ingrained values that presented in all outward action. Moore perceived he was understood by others in the institution and pushing was not an element that defined him as a leader.

Dorothy, Kate, and Tabitha come from an awareness of social justice and educational equity theory demonstrate role modelling in their leadership style. All three are conversant in their values and not averse to standing up in an unjust or inequitable situation their leadership styles in action, but on the whole, they did not demonstrate a tendency to a push in their leadership style. As leaders, they knew themselves and modelled social justice and equity in a quiet persistent way seizing moments to promote social justice and educational equity and on occasion push. As mainstream leaders, understanding of social justice and educational equity evolved with them in their roles.

Penny, Valerie, Sophie, and Jennifer' examples mainly typified erosion leadership. However, each of these participants identified particular times in their leadership where they shifted from erosion to pushing. Penny identified instances of pushing for universal design. Jennifer is a passionate mental health advocate which plays out assertively in her work with students and curriculum, but not as dominant in her postsecondary leadership role. Valerie and Sophie both discussed examples of pushing when promoting indigenization.

Mina and Giselle exemplified a more integrated pushing leadership persona with erosion in some circumstances. Mina clearly defined her persona as pushing. Mina reflected strong values, throughout her interview, with strong values and a strong advocate personality applied to all areas of her life. Mina noted the value of social justice and educational equity for her, but an area in which she does not feel expert. Similarly, Giselle's examples reflect a leadership style mirrored in a strong sense of the resolute. Giselle's perspective on social justice and educational equity stand apart from other leaders, but with a strong presence of integration into the fabric of her leadership persona.

Managing challenges and opportunities. Participants' dominant personas tended to mirror their actions in managing challenges and opportunities for social justice and educational equity. Recognition of the challenge or opportunity resonated as critical to the overall leadership action. Participants tended to be able to recognize gaps in their institutional system and gravitated to identifying opportunities or managing challenges from the position in the institution.

Sophie moved in her Dean's role and was immediately placed into a position of making an indigenous community project work. Sophie articulated:

> I needed to align myself in a way that people understand what I am saying and that I can stand behind what I am saying. So, and then I had to build relationships with other parts of the college that I knew might be with us …[that's the].kind of things I talked about. So I really had to do a lot of relationship-building inside the college, but also outside the college.

In managing this situation, as both an opportunity and a challenge, Sophie identified her use of role and self in "using my power to be vulnerable…by saying I'm the Dean and saying I am responsible for this. And so by saying "I'm responsible" I need to make sure it works."

Dorothy presented as a leader who seeks out both challenges and opportunities, and tunes in relatively quickly when opportunities or challenges present themselves. Dorothy elaborated:

> It's about tying the pieces together to make sense for the context in which you are operating. I think that's the critical piece. You can't just have a story and then not do things. I have always valued leaders who…speak through actions more than words or lectures. It's more what you do. So getting in there and being with students and showing that you value them. And that you are attentive to their uh successes. That you celebrate them. And that you are attentive to their difficulties and that you are also attentive to them. I think academic leaders really need to cultivate that. Listening, showing value, honoring other people and their experiences and then not just walking away from hearing about them, but keeping it on file and remembering. And I think that education leaders definitely need to have a story and stick with it and find a powerful one that speaks to social justice and educational equity…and they have to walk it.

Mina noted that in managing challenges and opportunities in her leadership position she needed to align her pushing persona to incorporate other perspectives. Mina noted a need to be true to her values and persona but broaden her frame at a system level

of awareness.

Recruiting others to the institution was identified as important in managing challenges and gaining opportunity by shifting the culture. Beatrice, Dorothy, and Kate noted, in particular, recruiting for diversity as both an opportunity in terms of attracting diversity and a challenge if they were unsuccessful. Beatrice and Kate noted that it was hard recruiting for diversity because everybody's trying to do it. Beatrice in discussing recruiting more faculty of indigenous background expressed frustration:

> there are very few people educated at that level who want to come here because we also don't pay the best. There was a person that I really wanted to hire. I offered her a full-time job she said "oh God I'd love to come here. I don't know if my husband's going to agree that we can take this pay cut" because she … had a well-paying job. Also, she was living on reserve so didn't have to pay income tax.

Summary

In this chapter, the following topics were presented: setting, demographics, data collection, data analysis, evidence of trustworthiness, and results. The results presented through themes generated from the data based on conceptual frameworks that included CST (Habermas, 1970) informing research question one (RQ1); and applied critical leadership theory (Santamaría, 2014) informing research question 2 (RQ2). In regard to the first research question, participants described their understanding of social justice and educational equity from their positions as mainstream leaders. In the second question,

leaders described their promotion of social justice and educational equity in their leadership practice.

In the first research question understanding of social justice and educational equity presented in two themes—creation of understanding and relevance to the leadership role. Understanding of social justice and educational equity was generally understood by most participants as including components of social justice and equity represented by research, broadened for one participant to include restorative justice. Most participants viewed social justice and educational equity from the perspective of the student through just and fair with a focus on access to education, resources, and distribution of resources. The individual participants' journey toward the creation of understanding was influenced by experiences in their families of origin, formative years, families formed through marriage and partnerships and professional disciplines. Participants, on the whole, positioned themselves in a positive orientation toward social justice and educational equity. The focus of participants orientations related to one or more of four areas: technical, multi-focused, stakeholder and participatory.

Relevance to leadership role coded into ideals, awareness, experience, and role relationship. Participants' ideals indicated a strong moral-ethical component for some and a passion or interest within their educational or discipline field. Awareness related to both self-reflective awareness and global or a broad awareness of factors related to social justice and educational equity. Experience in postsecondary leadership influenced participants' perceived ability to act or influence social justice and educational equity. Finally, participants' concept of their role both from a formal and informal perspective

influenced their perception of the possibilities of influence on social justice and educational equity.

In regard to the second research question, leaders' ability to promote social justice and educational equity resulted in three themes – leader awareness, leader presence, and leader in action. Leaders' reflective use of self and system awareness emerged as sub-themes of leader awareness. Participants' abilities to identify their traits for promotion and how they fit inside the system influenced the ability to promote. Leader presence included the leadership capital and the ability to translate and use the experience to promote social justice and educational equity. Finally, leader in action examined leadership persona and managing challenges and opportunities. Two predominant leadership personas were identified for this participant group—erosion and pushing. Both personas demonstrated strengths in promotion with some leaders balancing both personas in context to manage challenges and opportunities. Participant mainstream leaders tended to identify both challenges and opportunities in an ability to recognize gaps and fit their leadership persona into the gap to promote an opportunity or mitigate a challenge.

In Chapter 5 I will discuss my findings using the filter of the literature review. I apply my conceptual frameworks as I interpret the results of the study. I discuss the study limitations, recommendations for future research, and implications for positive social change. In conclusion, Chapter 5 is critical to understanding the role of mainstream postsecondary leadership in an inclusive and democratic society.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine how mainstream Canadian postsecondary leaders understand and promote social justice and educational equity in their leadership roles. Community colleges and institutes in Canada developed on the principles of student access to education. Increasingly these educational institutions are challenged to continue to provide access to a range of students, potentially leading to circumstances of oppression, marginalization, and exclusion. Postsecondary mainstream leaders' awareness of social justice and educational equity is critical to managing both challenges and opportunities in an increasingly diverse postsecondary landscape (Brooks & Miles, 2006; Diem & Boske, 2012; Wang, 2018).

For this study, I used a semistructured interview process to understand leaders' experiences and a process of inductive reasoning to ascribe meaning to responses. In this chapter, using the conceptual frameworks for the study, I interpret my findings in consideration of the results from other studies analyzed during the literature review. I report the limitations of the study, recommendations, and implications. My goal is to inform future research related to social justice and educational equity in mainstream postsecondary leadership.

Summary of Findings

Key findings related to (RQ1) indicated that participants of this study generally understood the concepts and principles of social justice and educational equity as outlined in the research. Each participant described their current understanding and the progression of the understanding over time. Experiences in their family of formation,

formative years, the family of partnership, scholarly discipline, and former education all contributed significantly to disposition, capacity and agency to promote social justice and educational equity. Participants displayed a positive orientation toward social justice and educational equity with a preference for a technical, multi-focused, stakeholder, or participatory orientation. All participants identified social justice and educational equity as relevant to their leadership role with ideals, awareness, experience, and role relationship emerging as significant.

Results related to RQ2 indicated that leader awareness, leader presence, and leader in action were critical to the promotion of social justice and educational equity in their leadership role. Leadership awareness included reflective use of self and at a broader level system awareness. Leader presence included leadership capital, translating, and using experience. This included a leader's relational ability to develop supports and an ally structure along with translating and using experience to work in partnership with others in the institution. Leader in action comprised leadership personae and managing challenges and opportunities. Two personas identified as pushing and erosion emerged as significant and effective in promoting social justice and educational equity. Generally, the personas aligned with the leader's ability and style in managing challenges and opportunities.

Interpretation of Findings

My interpretation of findings aligns with the following key aspects of my research questions: the understanding of mainstream postsecondary leaders of the relevance of social justice and educational equity in their leadership practice and how they describe

and understand their leadership in promoting. I will first interpret the study findings within the context of the conceptual framework for this study: CST (Habermas, 1970) and ACLT (Santamaría & Santamaria, 2014). Additionally, I will demonstrate the results of this study with findings in the peer-reviewed literature that relate to four threads in the literature: (a) disposition, capacity, and agency for social justice and equity leadership; (b) the influence of education on disposition, agency, and capacity; (c) leadership strategies to implement social justice and equity education; and (d) social justice and postsecondary education.

Disposition, Capacity, and Agency for Social Justice and Equity Leadership

Habermas (1970) contended in CST that social reality is historically composed, generated, and reconstructed consciously and deliberately. Theorists, such as Habermas, promote the use of CST in the development of a more just world through praxis in the reduction of power relationships. The significance of participants' experiences to their understanding and progression of understanding of social justice and educational equity was evident in my study.

Leaders operating in CST reflect the action and a sense of civic duty to invoke change (Freire, 1985). CST has shown some use in understanding how individuals move from thought to action (Brown, 2006). Findings in my study indicated that participants' ability to understand and translate their identity within their working environment was critical in moving toward action for social justice and they uniformly elaborated on some aspect of good and fair in their understanding of social justice and educational equity. Santamaria and Santamaria (2012) contend that leaders operating in an ACLT framework

think more deeply about their practice reflect on how their identities and experiences contribute to their ability to see, understand, or consider alternate leadership practice (Santamaria, 2012). Similar to Theoharis (2007) the participants in my study expressed strong values focus or a moral drive, to position themselves to view challenges related to social justice and educational equity from different perspectives.

Participants' experiences in their family of origin, formative, family of formation along with educational and professional discipline background played a role in the creation and progression of understanding. Similar to previous studies that identified an individual's ability for deep and critical reflection as important, participants in my study-related their stories as critical to their cumulative understanding of social justice and educational equity (Furman, 2012; Theoharis, 2007). Several participants shared powerful stories, or what Furman (2012) called the "storied self," that shaped their future moral and ethical stance toward a just and equitable society. It was evident during interviews that participants demonstrated a reflective identity about their experiences critical to the formation of their underlying values structure and contributory to their disposition, capacity, and agency toward social justice and educational equity. As in previous studies focusing on identity formation and life experiences (Arar, Beycioglu, & Oplatka, 2017; Zembylas & Iasonos, 2017), participants in my study tapped into their identities and life experiences to build bridges for social justice and educational equity within their local context.

It is important to note that three of 11 participants identified with non-dominant groups, two based on race and one based on sexual identity. Santamaría (2014) noted

that leaders from non-dominant groups tend to draw on positive aspects of their identities to dispel negative stereotypes. While this perspective is evident to some degree with these three participants, it appeared that all exuded a positive self-identity which framed their work as self-evident and integrated rather than standing apart.

Of the three participants, Beatrice presented her LGBTQ identity as "there" and it appeared evident that it is an integrated part of who she is and influences the directionality of her life and work. Kate, a leader of indigenous origins, presented her identity as an integrated component of who she is with it reflective in her leadership and discipline orientation and to some degree the focus of specific projects. Valerie, whose ethnicity is Indian, reflected from the position of immigrating to Canada and appeared to use those experiences toward an open curiosity and questioning of norms in both her discipline and postsecondary settings.

In contrast to earlier studies (Vogel, 2012; Theoharis, 2007) findings in my study indicated that the participants as mainstream postsecondary leaders generally understood significant elements of social justice and educational equity. Two participants displayed a more advanced knowledge based on education for one and extensive reading for the other. Beatrice, the participant with a scholarly background in social justice, displayed the widest understanding of social justice and educational equity. Beatrice displayed a global perspective found to be significant in previous studies to generate alternative explanations and ways of understanding (Zembylas & Iasonos, 2017). Giselle, who read extensively, displayed a knowledge of the theoretical origins of social justice with her definition positioned at one end of the spectrum. The remaining nine participants all

displayed knowledge of component parts of social justice and educational equity with a strong directionality for good and fair and an interest in knowing more than their current level of knowledge. As found in previous studies (Berkovich, 2014; Boske, 2015; Theoharis, 2007) participants in this study, while varied in their level of understanding of social justice, appeared to possess overall a capacity for self-reflection found to be significant in developing capacity for action in advocating social justice and educational equity practices.

Influence of Education on Disposition, Agency, and Capacity

Only one participant reported experiencing a direct inclusion of social justice and equity scholarship in their formal studies. Individuals with a health discipline background indicated some exposure to aspects of social justice and education equity in the educational backgrounds or through research when developing curriculum as faculty members. All participants drew on experiences in their careers and their lives standpoint as the impetus to find out more about social justice and equity.

While formal education on social justice and educational equity were limited in participants there appeared to be an awareness of their actions about social justice and equity contexts. This was in contrast to studies by Vogel (2012) and Boske (2015) where meaningful actions or projects were required to move individual participants from reflection to action. An institutional focus on indigenization was frequently noted by participants and this was in part likely an explanation for the ability of these participants to move toward a level of action in their leadership roles. It is important to note that most

action occurred at the role level with some insights about institutional and societal structures that perpetuate marginalization and oppression of groups.

Leadership Strategies to Implement Social Justice and Equity in Education

Santamaría and Santamaría (2012), in applied critical leadership theory, proposed a concept of strengths-based leadership. Leaders in a strength-based leadership model consider the social context of their educational environment and empower members within their educational community based on their identities. Santamaría and Santamaría noted that leaders in this context apply interest convergence to promote action for marginalized groups, being cognizant of their identities as individuals and leaders in doing so.

During the interview process, it was apparent that the participants as leaders embodied applied critical leadership, although they did not name it as such. Participants were reflective on their identities as leaders and demonstrated abilities to use those strengths for relational networking and actions toward managing both challenges and opportunities related to social justice. Similar to Jayavant (2016), participants in my study, if from a privileged group, tended to look through a critical lens in their leadership to lead from a context of diversity. Santamaria and Santamaria (2012) likewise noted in ACLT that leaders operating in this framework tend to be self-aware and work to understand individuals from diverse groups. The majority of participants in my study either expressed a desire to work from diversity or presented experiences of how they worked within diversity to achieve outcomes in alignment with social justice and educational equity. Eight of 11 participants expressed knowledge of, and interest in,

indigenization process, revealing a consistent lens for diversity through which they considered their actions both for indigenization and the broader aspects of culture.

Participants demonstrated a people-centered and particularly a student-centered approach. Wang's (2018) research outcomes demonstrated that participants were highly individualized in their approaches, but minimally aware based on interview data of how the norms and practices of the institution produced social, political, and economic inequities. Participants noted these inequities from a societal perspective but did not elaborate within an institutional context. Participants also noted a varying awareness amongst their responsible administrators with some indicating administrators had a high level of awareness but that translation into institutional systems was not yet evident or occurring slowly.

Participant responses supported the work of Drago-Severson and Blum-DeStefano (2019) on the developmental orientations or ways of knowing influencing leadership for social justice. Participant responses substantiated the four ways of knowing: instrumental (concrete), socializing (other-focused), self-authoring (reflective), and self-transforming (inter-connected). Participant responses indicated, especially in their progression of understanding and reflection on action their movement through the stages, identified by Drago-Severson and Blum-DeStefano. Participants in my study, with increasing experience as leaders, demonstrated a developing ability toward collectivity, the reflective use of self, and manage contradictions in their working environment. Developmental traits for social justice being an ingrained way of knowing were evident for six participants, all be it at different stages within the ingrained component of the

process. I believe my study adds support to the literature for studies by Wang (2018) and Drago-Severson and Blum-DeStefano (2019).

Social Justice and Postsecondary Education

As I discussed in the literature review, it was evident that the majority of studies reviewed related to leadership for social justice and educational equity were set within the K–12 educational system. Studies in postsecondary education focused on non-dominant group leadership (Peercy & Svenson, 2016; Wilson-Strydom, 2017). The mainstream leaders participating in this study represented a segment of leadership in postsecondary who perform the day-to-day leadership activities required in postsecondary institutions.

Unlike research in the K–12 sectors (Berkovich, 2017; Hernandez & Marshall, 2017), the participants in this study, except for one, did not undertake formal education on social justice and educational equity. Participants in this study were discipline experts first with educational theory and practice added to their knowledge, skills, and abilities as they entered the academy. As leaders, they often entered their postsecondary roles organically and not necessarily as a career aspiration. The one participant with a background in social justice and educational equity chose education as her postgraduate field after her undergraduate discipline education. Teachers in K–12 require a somewhat standardized curriculum for teacher licensing (Allen et al., 2017; Kezar, 2011), unlike participants in this study whose teaching is based on discipline interest. This illustrates the nature of postsecondary educational practitioners having a primary mandate of discipline expertise with a non-standardized approach to educational methodology.

Participants in this study revealed a strong positive orientation toward social justice and educational equity, not necessarily representative of the majority of postsecondary leaders (Hernandez & Marshall, 2017; Theoharis, 2007). Participants overall demonstrated a strong student focus on their social justice and educational equity understanding and leadership actions. Indigenization, as previously mentioned, presented as a significant emphasis for eight of 11 participants. The remaining participants all identified an area of interest, such as universal design and accommodation, as their central point of interest in promoting social justice and educational equity. Similar to previous studies Two of 11 participants indicated measures such as actively sending articles related to social justice and educational equity to fellow faculty or senior administrators to promote social justice literacy to promote understanding, allies, and political strategy (Armstrong et al., 2013; Furman,2012; Ryan & Tuters, 2017).

Nine of 11 participants in this study mentioned international students. As in Killick's (2017) study, participants identified some elements of deficit mentality toward international students as evident in colleagues. Participants in this study experiencing this challenge tended to express a broad cultural view in their leadership and actions relating to social justice and educational equity. Similar to Killick, participants in my study identified issues related to international students as a source of both conflict and marginalization.

Similar to previous studies (Armstrong et al., 2013), all participants identified elements within their roles where they found alternative methods to foster social justice and equity. Common examples included the provision of student access through waivers

or interventions with marginalized students. Entering juxtaposing ideas into the discussion with others was another method used by participants to stimulate discussion and action. Collectivity in terms of working in teams, speaking out with colleagues, and policy development were all forwarded as necessary in moving the concepts of social justice and equity forward. These findings are similar to Armstrong et al. (2013) in the use of indirect political techniques and the strategic use of role.

Two leadership styles, erosion and pushing, predominated in the study group. Both styles appeared equally effective in promoting social justice and educational equity from the viewpoint of participants. Generally, leadership style and participant identity were aligned. The pushing style tended to create a bold vision as noted by authors Theoharis and Causton-Theoharis (2008) and Furman (2012), with both styles, fostered leadership that influenced others (Jayavant, 2016). As found by Ryan and Tuters (2017), the erosion style of leadership of participants in this study reflects the more discreet style of leadership with participants strategically mobilizing social justice priorities. The use of the storied self in promoting social justice and educational equity was evident in participants' stories (Furman, 2012). Within the same context, participants appeared to engage in courageous conversations when the principles of good and fair seemed in jeopardy in specific situations.

Creation of safe space did not appear to be a concern for participants in this study. Two participants discussed a level of safe space. One participant indicated that the conversations about social justice were more difficult with colleagues who delivered and championed competitive entry programs. These colleagues tended to view education on

merit, a concept at odds with the open access mandate of community colleges. The other participant expressed surprise at the opportunity for safe space at her institution at the senior leadership levels to discuss ideas that were controversial concerning the political aspects of marginalization (Boske, 2015; Jayavant, 2016; Santamaría, 2014).

Finally, previously reviewed studies indicated that leaders in higher education, engaged in promoting social justice, viewed themselves as more isolated in their collegial community than K–12 teachers (Santamaría, 2014: Wilson-Strydom, 2014). However, the participants in this study only partially expressed this view. As leaders in their professional discipline, participants did indicate that when they advocated or initiated social justice actions for students, such as waivers, it was not an isolating experience as much as a defending their actions for the greater good. As noted by McArthur (2016), assessment is a key driver for what and how students learn in higher education. Previous studied noted outcome and professional demands of different disciplines as influences affecting social justice and educational equity actions by participants in this study.

As with the study by Drago-Severson and Blum-DeStefano (2019), participants in this study showed the development of orientations across the spectrum in their stories. Changing roles, additional reading or education, and experiences all contributed to the leadership practice of participants in this study. As with other studies, the ability of participants to self-reflect remained key. As roles changed, participants shifted in their range of responses to promote social justice and educational equity. The voices of mainstream postsecondary educators in this study represent a generally positive orientation toward social justice and educational equity. As with previous studies, the

different areas of professional and scholarly expertise and diversity of faculty disciplines in postsecondary education presents a unique challenge to a consistent approach to the promotion of social justice and educational equity (Jayavant, 2016; Santamaria & Gaetane, 2014). The ability of leaders to reflect on identity and to understand themselves as actors in their environmental context remains pivotal for leadership about social justice and educational equity (Farrell, 2016; Furman, 2012; Gordon & Ronder, 2016; Pantic, 2017; Santamaria & Santamaria, 2012).

Limitations of the Study

One of the primary limitations of this study was that participant recruitment tended toward participants with a positive affinity for social justice and educational equity. A second limitation of the study was that it did not include the executive level of postsecondary education leaders such as presidents and vice presidents and there was only one participant who was a leader in postsecondary support services. Additional interviews with the executive level and educational support services leaders could provide new understandings notably, at the higher level of policy development and socio-political context. Regardless, the results of this study have the potential to influence policy, processes, and promotional actions of leaders beyond the geography of this study.

The sample population and size limited transferability of the results. All participants were experienced postsecondary leaders often holding increasingly complex roles. However, the 11 participants represented the middle levels of postsecondary educational leadership and a range of discipline expertise. While participants' experiences represented midlevel postsecondary leadership, including unionized and

nonunionized positions, further studies are needed of mainstream leaders to extend understanding of leaders' experiences.

Open coding, used in this study, as recommended by Rubin and Rubin (2012) addressed limitations. I did not use pre-structured codes as they could have overlooked emergent themes or made improper connections to information that was not there, or observed links based on those pre-existing codes. I provided transcripts of the interviews to participants to eliminate any research bias and increase the dependability of the study. I minimized any additional bias through researcher reflection. I journaled in a hardbound notebook and made notes on reflection in NVIVO 11 as I worked on data analysis.

Recommendations

Recommendations for future research include studies that recruit for a broader selection of participants concerning the leader's roles, disciplines, and experiences. A mixed-methods study with a quantitative tool to assess social justice and educational equity orientations, followed by a selection for interviews across types of orientations, would be useful. Studies within North America, but and specifically Canada are limited, thus expanding geographic regions is warranted. A broader geographical study would add more detail about specific cultural contexts of different regions and add to the body of knowledge about the influence of indigenization programs in Canada.

Additional studies on developing and assessing the effectiveness of educational leadership programs for social justice and educational promotion at the postsecondary level is required. Research related to institutional structures and leadership understanding of forces at the system level would add to the broader strategic picture. Specifically

examining leadership awareness of the forces related to oppression and marginalization from the structural component is necessary. Community colleges and institutions are evolving, but open access remains a priority for many institutions for which social justice and educational equity is pivotal.

Implications for Social Change

The results of the study have the potential to influence postsecondary educational leadership knowledge and actions. While social change and educational equity are part of university scholarship, community colleges and institutions remain understudied relative to social justice, educational equity and leadership. Community colleges and institutes while evolving retain their open access mandate; thus, these concepts remain critical to the vision and mission of community colleges and institutes.

While issues related to marginalization were previously studied, the specific influence of postsecondary education and systemic barriers to access remain unclear. Postsecondary education, unlike K–12, does not require specific educational competencies for postsecondary faculty. Students moving from high school to postsecondary are accustomed to accommodation and consideration for a wider variety of marginalized groups. Thus, students moving into postsecondary education are unprepared for the system based in part on merit and in part on access. Faculty teaching solely based on discipline expertise are unprepared for a learner used to experiencing a somewhat individualized and anti-oppressive experience. Without leadership that can consider, operationalize, and translate the broader context, conflicts emerge, and barriers to access remain.

Findings in my study are congruent with the observations of Santamaría (2014), Wang (2018), and Drago-Severson and Blum-DeStefano (2019) key in assessing the development level of social justice and equity awareness. These findings support the potential for the development of social justice and educational equity components in leadership programs. Increased understanding of social justice and educational equity at all levels of the system opens the door toward a more informed assessment of systemic barriers in postsecondary education, potential solutions, and thus positive social change.

Conclusion

This study provided a view into the mainstream postsecondary educational leader's understanding and promotion of social justice. Leaders in postsecondary are discipline experts with varying levels of educational expertise. While there appears to be a positive orientation among leaders to consider social justice and educational equity, a comprehensive, unified approach is not yet evident. Exploring these areas in institutions that remain open access, serving a cross-section of society, is vital to the broader role of education in a democratic society.

This results of this study provide a start into considering what knowledge, skills, and abilities are vital to postsecondary leaders to promote social justice and educational equity and inform the development of future leaders. Analysis of participant responses indicated a positive orientation for a sub-sector of educational leaders and a confirmation of the relevance of social justice and educational equity to their roles. It was noted during interviews, that more in-depth knowledge as it applied to leadership is relevant to their mainstream postsecondary roles. This outcomes of this study assist in identifying

the gaps in postsecondary leaders understanding and a potential developmental pathway for future postsecondary leadership education programs.

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Appendix: Interview Guide

1. Tell me about what roles you have played as an educational leader?

Probes- based on the answer for the length of service, probe for the level of leadership or title of the role, overall responsibilities, and scope of the role.

2. Can you tell me how you either came to understand the term *social justice* or your current understanding of the term *social justice*? Probe: Has your understanding of it changed over time? Can you tell me about that?

3. Can you tell me how you either came to understand the term *educational equity* or your current understanding of the term *educational equity*? Probe: Has your understanding changed over time? Can you tell me about that?

4. In your current leadership position, are social justice and educational equity relevant to the role? If so, can you tell me how? Can you give an example of how you apply or use social justice and educational equity in your leadership role? Probe: is the importance of social justice and educational equity different in this role versus past roles you've occupied? Can you give me an example of a difference?

5. In your present or past experiences as a leader, could you tell me about a time you perceive you were successful in promoting social justice and educational equity? What do you thin– made it successful?

Probes: Are there other examples that you perceive were a success?

6. In your present or past experiences as a leader, could you tell me about a time you perceive you promoted social justice or educational equity, and the outcome did not go as planned?

Probes: Are there other examples where you perceive the outcome did not match your intent or effort?

7. Concerning your leadership role and social justice and educational equity are there ways others in your organization have contributed to your efforts to promote social justice and educational equity? If so, can you tell me how? Conversely, are there ways others have detracted from your efforts to promote social justice and educational equity?

8. What have you experienced as the most significant challenges in promoting social justice and educational equity in your current role? In one or more of your past roles?

Probe: How did you manage those challenges?

9. In your current institutional role and for the area in which you lead, what would you view as being the ideal state for social justice and educational equity?

10. What knowledge, skills, or abilities would do you believe are critical in leaders to possess or to develop for the promotion of social justice and educational equity in a postsecondary institution.

Closing

Is there anything else I should have asked? Is there anything else you would like to share?

Do you have any questions for me?

I will forward a copy of your interview to review for clarity and to ensure accuracy. If I conduct follow-up studies on social justice and educational equity, may I contact you again for participation? Thank you again for participating in this study and your time.