

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Amy E. Folz for the degree of Master of Science in College Student Services Administration presented on May 27, 2008.

Title: Effective Social Justice Practice in Higher Education: A Qualitative Study of Experienced Student Affairs Professionals

Abstract approved:

Thomas D. Scheuermann

This thesis is a qualitative study of the social justice practice of experienced student affairs professionals employed in higher education. If we are to be truly supportive of all of our students, as is paramount in the values of student affairs professionals (Komives et al., 2003), systemic change is needed that fundamentally alters the values and practices of whole institutions. Thus, it is appropriate for student affairs professionals to become social justice advocates in the context of their duty to support students to the greatest extent possible. What, then, does it mean to be a social justice advocate, especially in the context of higher education?

To research this question, five participants were identified who all had been employed in higher education for at least ten years, who self-identified as social justice advocates – people who are thoughtful about social justice issues and about integrating social justice into their careers – and who have been directly involved in resolving a crisis or conflict around difference or diversity on at least one occasion

during the course of their career. Interviews were conducted with all participants. The data was analyzed using a variation of standard coding techniques (Creswell, 2005).

From the data, I identified six themes, each with multiple sub-themes. These themes represented the overarching topics that participants mentioned during the course of the interviews. I also identified five categories of corresponding attributes and skills that were mentioned by participants that had been instrumental to their learning about and practice of social justice. While generalizable results were not the goal of this qualitative study, this thesis concludes with potential implications for individual's learning about and practicing social justice, including graduate school preparation, and suggestions for further research.

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Effective Social Justice Practice in Higher Education:
A Qualitative Study of Experienced Student Affairs Professionals

by
Amy E. Folz

A THESIS

submitted to

Oregon State University

in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the
degree of

Master of Science

Presented May 27, 2008
Commencement June 2009

Master of Science thesis of Amy E. Folz
presented on May 27, 2008.

APPROVED:

Major Professor, representing College Student Services Administration

Dean of the College of Education

Dean of the Graduate School

I understand that my thesis will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my thesis to any reader upon request.

Amy E. Folz, Author

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I have many people I would like to acknowledge in my journey through graduate school and my thesis preparation, research, and writing. My major professor Tom Scheuermann made himself available to me whenever I needed guidance, while also running the University Housing and Dining Services, teaching classes, and helping to fill our vacant department head position for many months. He consistently provided me with the positive energy I needed to maintain my confidence and momentum for this project. I would also like to thank my other committee members, Larry Roper and Lani Roberts, and Ilene Kleinsorge. Larry Roper, Vice Provost for Student Affairs and Interim Dean of the College of Liberal Arts, provided his help multiple times, offering feedback on my initial research questions and getting me started on my literature review. Lani Roberts, Assistant Professor in the department of Philosophy and Ethicist, taught several of my classes. She consistently provided honest, meaningful, and thoughtful feedback on both my class work and thesis. Ilene Kleinsorge, Dean of the College of Business and my Graduate Council Representative, was willing to step in late, filling this role when my previous Graduate Council Representative left OSU.

I extend my thanks to the College Student Services Administration faculty and my wonderful cohort. Without their teaching, guidance, support, commiseration, encouragement, and occasional after-class drinks, I would have found this journey much more difficult. Thank you all for providing me with community and care.

OSU Extended Campus (Ecampus) and the Natural Resources program provided me with colleagues, work experience, and a stipend! Thank you to my Ecampus supervisor, Paula Minear, for seeing my potential and allowing me to act on it, and to the rest of the Ecampus staff (and especially the Department and Student Services unit) for their support through the years. Thank you to Paul Doescher, Connie Patterson, and Marge Victor, my Natural Resources supervisor and colleagues. They have allowed me to learn from their hectic operation and I have enjoyed helping them in turn.

Finally, I give a huge thank-you to my family, my other friends, and my partner. I am very grateful to my family, especially parents, Lois and Paul Folz, and my brother Steven. They have all been very supportive of my journey through graduate school, and have shown this support and care in many ways even though we live far apart. (This has included sending me banana bread, cookies, notes of encouragement, and other goodies in the mail!) I wish Steven luck on the continuation of his education toward a PhD in Biomedical Engineering. I thank my friends for being there for me, even after times apart. I also thank the OSU LGBTQQIA community as a whole, as they have truly been an example of what community should look like. Joscelyne Kravitz, my partner, has been with me through all my ups and downs, alternately being a coach, cheerleader, shoulder to cry on, and friend. To all of you, I send my love.

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Introduction

This thesis is a qualitative study of the social justice practice of experienced student affairs professionals employed in higher education. Multicultural competence has become a more commonly used term in higher education, but the question of how social justice fits into this concept is still unclear. This study approached social justice from the practitioner's standpoint, attempting to capture their experience of incorporating social justice practice into their functional area (e.g. leadership development, housing, etc.) of student affairs. This chapter discusses the background and significance of the study, defines key terms, outlines the research problem and questions, and presents an overview of the methodology used. At the end of this chapter, I will note the delimitations, or boundaries, of the study, some assumptions I made for the purposes of writing this thesis, and a brief overview of Chapters 3-5 of this of the thesis.

Background

Higher education in the United States was created by and for wealthy white men, and was only very slowly opened up to white women and people of color. Even after they were permitted to attend institutions of higher education, women and people of color were forced for decades to go to "separate but equal" institutions that lacked adequate supplies, buildings, and the rigorous curriculum that was offered by the white male counterpart institutions (Cohen, 1998). Although higher education has

changed dramatically, this legacy is not completely in the past. As Pem Davidson Buck (2001), author of an alternative history, said,

There is nothing new about what is happening to the United States these days. Legal and illegal violence is not new; nor is racialized politics new; neither is a divisive, exclusionary reaction to loss of privilege new. ... these have been at the basis of the U.S. social structure since the earliest of colonial days (p. 221).

Since “whiteness [is] a set of practices designed to keep resources in elite hands” (Buck, p. 222), there is a multitude of ways that resulting oppression manifests itself in our society. Most of these ways are imbedded in the primary systems of our society, including education. A 2006 report by the American Council on Education, which is based on Education Department and Census Bureau data from 1993 to 2003, showed that white high school graduates are more likely than their black or Hispanic peers to enroll in college (Marklein, 2006). According to the report, 47.3 percent of white high school graduates ages 18 to 24 attend college, vs. 41.1 percent of black and 35.2 percent of Hispanic high school graduates. Among other findings, Hispanic enrollment in college rose 70 percent, the highest recorded enrollment increase of all racial and ethnic groups. This might sound promising, but the report also stated that participation rates remained nearly flat due to the dramatic rise in the population overall. Beverly Daniel Tatum, president of Spelman College, a historically black college, and chair of a commission that produces the report, noted that the overall minority increases are encouraging, “but we are also concerned by what still seems to be slow growth. While we see forward movement, it is incremental and not transformational” (Marklein, 2007, para. 5). These numbers show that social justice in

higher education has not yet been achieved, and, in fact, we still have a long way to go.

Another article addresses these inequalities from a different angle. It discusses the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association, where the research presented provided support for affirmative action. The scholars at the meeting agreed that voters would abolish affirmative action if they are only warned about sharp drops in minority enrollment. Many voters believe those drops in enrollment would reflect lack of merit on the part of potential students. The research of Robert T. Teranishi is designed to counter this “blaming the victim” mentality (Jaschik, 2008), which ignores the real problem of continued systemic oppression. In that study, the lack of preparation was found in the quality of the school, not the student. Teranishi’s data showed that the best way for a black or Latino/a student to get into a university in California was to attend a “white” high school. One key finding was that the greater proportion of black and Latino/a students in a high school, the fewer Advanced Placement (AP) courses are likely to be available. The article quotes Walter Allen, a professor of higher education at UCLA who said that the data suggest that admissions systems that are supposedly designed to favor merit are, in fact, protecting privilege, and the black and Latino/a populations get ripped off, both as students and as taxpayers. “The poor folk are subsidizing the educations of wealthy people” (Jaschik, 2008, para. 9). The effect of these trends is to make the real inequities invisible, so that white privilege is, by default, protected (Buck, 2001; McIntosh, 2007).

Statistics indicating systemic racism are only a fraction of those that illustrate oppression overall in the educational system. Systemic homophobia, ableism, sexism, and other oppressions are reflected in the results from other studies. For example, an article in *Inside Higher Ed*, states that “in *many* [italics added] professional fields, women have achieved parity and sometimes surpassed men” (Thacker, 2007, para. 3, emphasis added). They then quote data from 2002-2003 that shows only four fields where numbers of women are similar to or greater than that of men. They also include data from 2005 that reflects two fields where women are surpassing or nearly equal to men, and ten in which women lagged 35.3 to 5.8 percent behind men. Obviously progress has been made, but to me, this proportion is not “many,” nor is it acceptable. The article goes on to show that minority group members have fared less well than white women. For example, African Americans make up 13 percent of the population, and earned 8.4 percent of bachelor’s degrees, 6.3 percent of master’s degrees, and 2.8 percent of doctorate degrees. (Thacker, 2007, para. 6).

These statistics help to illustrate the problem of oppression, which is defined in the Terminology section of this chapter and discussed throughout this thesis. Oppression operates such a way that many people are oblivious to the fact that we all are participating in this system, even if that is not our intent. As I have attempted to illustrate, many people still face the barriers created by oppression on a daily basis. As in the past, this oppression does not disappear when those people step onto a college or university campus. Life can be especially stressful for students of color on

predominantly White campuses. As Beverly Daniel Tatum (1997) states, this should not come as a surprise, but it often does.

White students and faculty frequently underestimate the power and presence of overt and covert manifestations of racism on campus, and students of color often come to predominantly White campuses expecting more civility than they find (p. 77-78).

Significance

Student affairs professionals will increasingly find the need and opportunity to practice social justice in their positions, including educating students about their place in the larger world and building community among diverse groups of students. Despite the growing diversity of the school-age population, there is a strong trend toward resegregation in primary school districts (Orfield, Frankenberg, & Lee, 2002). Thus, it is likely that college will be the first time many students will find themselves in a multi-racial environment. This trend of increasing diversity in higher education is likely to continue as access to higher education for oppressed groups continues to grow (National Center for Education Statistics, 2007). Additionally, students today bring with them a wide variety of experiences, desires, and needs, which vary depending on age, cultural background, race, sex, sexual orientation, religion, ability, and a variety of other factors. This potentially includes the oppression they have faced in their lives, and which they will continue to face while attempting to attain their educational goals (Tatum, 1997).

These factors leave student affairs professionals in a unique place to challenge and support students in interactions with those who are similar to and different from themselves in many ways. If so motivated and prepared, student affairs professionals can and should go further. Advocates in upper administration are especially needed, as these professionals have influence that students do not share (Reason & Broido, 2005). This work includes providing support for the recruitment and retention of diverse students, faculty, and staff; studying and improving campus climate; advocating for social justice coursework; advocating for inclusion of social justice issues across the curriculum and co-curriculum; working to change unjust policies, practices, and laws; knowing and using institutional decision making structures strategically; frequenting institutions that support justice and boycotting those that do not; and persevering (Reason & Broido, 2005). These actions can make radical differences in the lives of our students, in our institutions, and in the world at large.

Student affairs professionals have begun responding to the increasing diversity in higher education in practice and in research, but more work remains to be done. The literature includes calls to action (Gayles & Kelly, 2007; McEwen & Roper 1994). It also includes emphasis on multicultural competence as a new competency for student affairs professionals (Pope, Reynolds, & Mueller, 2004; Komives, Woodard & Assoc., 2003), to the point where *multicultural competence* is becoming a buzzword in the field of student affairs. Becoming multiculturally competent is now believed by many to be the responsibility of student affairs professionals on every level and in every area of the university (Pope et al.). This discussion about diversity and multicultural

competence has caused many student affairs preparation programs to institute diversity requirements, but the extent to which this is emphasized in the program and the actual degree of student learning varies greatly (Gayles & Kelly, 2007).

Social justice is also spoken of in the literature; conceptually, how it is different from or similar to *multicultural competence* is unclear. These terms will be discussed briefly here, and at length in the Terminology and Defining Social Justice sections of this thesis. Most writing about multicultural competence appears to address the changing demographics of higher education and have the goal of outlining the awareness, knowledge, and skills necessary to navigate an increasingly diverse population effectively. The multicultural competency matrix developed by Pope et al. (2004) includes awareness, knowledge, and skill dimensions; elements of social justice, such as power, privilege, oppression, and social change, are embedded in all levels of this matrix. Multicultural competence, however, does not emphasize social change as much as it emphasizes the ability to work with people different from oneself.

Being a social justice advocate asks us to tread down a similar yet different path, to not just understand ourselves and work with others, but to integrate into every aspect of our lives, all the time, an active commitment to social justice. There was a time in my life when I knew about the inequity of the world, but, as a white person, could and did step back from any action. (According to one of the participants in this study, people of color generally do not have the privilege to step back (Charles).) I felt frustrated, hopeless, and helpless to react. We do not need to feel this way; there are

people in many helping professions, including student services, who have effectively integrated their commitment to social justice into their lives and careers. Hopefully, we can learn something new from their examples. This learning and exploration is a primary purpose of my thesis research.

The lack of clarity around these concepts and emphasis on multicultural competence could mean that the active, vocal aspect of social justice is actually overlooked by practitioners. Multicultural competence can be seen as a tool for creating and sustaining more effective dialogue and social change, but if this is not intentionally brought into the open, it is unlikely to happen. Furthermore, while studies of multiculturally competent professionals have been done, no research that I reviewed studies those who are identified as effective in working toward social justice and educating students toward this goal. Thus, we know little about how being a social justice advocate may be different from being multiculturally competent and what attributes and skills are helpful in being an effective social justice advocate within student affairs.

Problem Statement and Research Questions

If we are to be truly supportive of all of our students, as is paramount in the values of student affairs professionals (Komives et al., 2003), systemic change is needed that fundamentally alters the values and practices of whole institutions. Thus, it is appropriate for student affairs professionals to become social justice advocates in the context of their duty to support students to the greatest extent possible. What, then,

does it mean to be a social justice advocate, especially in the context of higher education? This thesis examines the role of social justice in student affairs by studying student affairs professionals who are identified by their peers to be effective at incorporating social justice practice into their work.

The research questions of this study are: How do student affairs professionals define social justice, in the context of higher education? How do student affairs professionals come to be oriented toward social justice practice? What are the attributes of student affairs professionals who have integrated social justice practice into their professional practice? What essential skills are necessary to practice social justice in student affairs?

Overview of Methods

This study uses adapted coding methods (Creswell, 2005) to analyze interview data from five participants. The participants were identified through snowball sampling to locate “data-rich” participants, or those who would be able to speak directly to the topic being studied. They were all selected from a large, public university in the Pacific Northwest. I emailed prospective participants, and then emailed the confirmed participants with further explanation, the IRB consent document, and the written and interview questions I would be asking. I met with each participant for an average of one hour for the interviews, and also collected written data from four participants.

The interviews were transcribed by a professional, confidential transcriptionist, and then I went over them to ensure that they were as accurate as possible. I did not use the written data in the data analysis due to the fact that it was incomplete and did not yield as much data as I had expected. The multiple stages of coding resulted in the identification of six overall themes, each with multiple sub-themes, and five categories of attributes and skills. A thorough discussion of the methods can be found in the Methods chapter (Chapter 3), and discussion of results is provided in the Results chapter (Chapter 4).

Terminology

Some key terms need to be defined. These are terms that may be vague or have multiple meanings. In some cases, they are definitions I have created or modified in some way.

Oppression

The definition of *oppression* that I use throughout this thesis comes from Suzanne Pharr (2007). All oppressions, such as racism, sexism, homophobia, are, according to Pharr (2007), “linked through a common origin – economic power and control – and by common methods of limiting, controlling, and destroying lives” (p. 10). She also discusses the common elements of oppressions. These begin with a defined norm, or a standard of righteousness that all others are judged in relation to. This norm must be backed up by: 1. institutional power, 2. economic power, and 3.

both institutional and individual violence. She points out that this norm does not need to represent the majority, but only those who have the ability to exert power and control over others (p. 10). It will be assumed that the reader understands the meaning of this definition; for a further explanation of this definition, please refer to the original work.

Social Justice

Social justice, as I define it, is: a movement for social change, which seeks to end oppression in all its forms, whether blatant or invisible, individual or institutional; and seeks to ensure that all people be treated with dignity and respect and are welcomed with hospitality regardless of their circumstances. I elaborate on this definition at length in the Social Justice Defined section of the Literature Review (Chapter 2).

Social Justice Ally

A *social justice ally* has been defined as a person who is a member of a dominant group (white people, heterosexuals, etc.) who actively works against the system of oppression that gives them privilege and power based on their dominant group status (Broido, 2000, 2005; Edwards, 2006; Reason, Roosa Millar, & Scales, 2005).

Social Justice Advocate

I will use the phrase *social justice advocate* to refer to anyone, regardless of group membership, who is dedicated to working toward such social change on behalf of their and other social groups. As most people can be in the position to both oppress and be oppressed (for example a white woman can be oppressed by white men and oppress black women) the distinction between allies and people advocating for themselves is unclear at best. By using the term advocacy I do not mean to imply that it is appropriate for a social justice advocate to appropriate the issues and voices or otherwise disempower the group(s) for whom they are attempting to advocate. For example, a group can be disempowered by having someone speak for them, thus taking away their power to speak their truths in their own words. Rather, that individual could strategize with the group to find out how and when they should participate. The term 'advocacy' is, in my experience, used with caution due to the above implication. Rather, I use the term to mean social justice practice that empowers all and works toward undoing systems that make some oppressors and others oppressed.

Multicultural Competence

Having *multicultural competence* has been defined in most of the student affairs literature as the awareness, knowledge, and skills needed to work with others who are culturally different from self in meaningful, relevant, and productive ways, as

well as those who are culturally similar when confronting cultural issues (Pope et al., 2004).

Skills and Attributes

For the purposes of answering my research questions, I will also define *skills* versus *attributes*. According to the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, a skill is “a learned power of doing something competently : a developed aptitude or ability” (retrieved April 14, 2008). An attribute is “an inherent characteristic” and “a word ascribing a quality” (retrieved April 14, 2008). As I coded the data, I discovered that these definitions proved to be insufficient to group the data into categories of “attributes” and “skills.” For example, can an “inherent characteristic” be changed? If believing in fairness and equity is “inherent” and thus a fixed quality, there is no point to writing this thesis. However, it is my experience that one can choose to believe in fairness and equity; does this choice mean that this is not an attribute? If not, then what can be considered to be an attribute of a person? Therefore, I used the following self-created definition: an attribute is an internal process, while a skill is a reflection of that process as actions in the world.

Limitations

The primary limitation, or boundary, of this study is the lack of generalizability. This thesis is as much a product of my own curiosity and self-education as it was my hope to be a contribution to the body of student affairs and

social justice literature. As such, this study was not designed to provide results that would apply to a large audience, but as a starting point for further research in this area, and to, hopefully, provide a guidepost for individuals' own journeys to effectively practice social justice in the field of student affairs. The lack of generalizability is due, in part, to several factors. It lacks traditional generalizability because it is a qualitative study. As Janesick (2000) notes, traditional thinking about generalizability falls short when applied to qualitative research studies (p. 393-394). Other factors include the small number of participants and the fact that participants are drawn from one type of institution in one regional area.

The validity of the results was limited by the fact that I was unable to use one portion of the data. The research and interview questions I selected and the manner in which I administered them may have biased the study in some unforeseen way. Additionally, the small sample size may not have allowed for the full complexity of social justice practice to emerge in the results due to the fact that there is a multitude of viewpoints and ways in which individuals approach and effectively work toward social justice. However, while the results are likely to be viewed as incomplete, I believe they provide a foundation for more detailed research.

Assumptions

My assumptions are that oppression of many groups of people is still a reality in our country and the world. Oppression is so ingrained in our lives that it becomes invisible to many. Education, including higher education, is a system in which

oppression is present. Additionally, the responsibility for all of humankind rests upon each one of us, and especially people who are in positions to influence and advocate for others, including student affairs professionals. Student affairs professionals should have an understanding of what oppression is, and how it works, and know how to effectively and actively work against oppressive forces and toward justice.

Oppression still exists in our world in many ways. In the United States, we have taken many steps toward justice for all, however, much more work remains to be done. I encourage the reader to examine the definition of oppression that is in the Terminology section of this chapter, and to apply that definition to specific situations to see for themselves where oppression is present. Oppression is also discussed further in the Literature Review (Chapter 2) of this thesis.

Due to the fact that oppression is systemic, it is likely that most people in the higher education system have been exposed to oppressive messages with and without their knowledge. Pharr (2007) points out that some of the methods of enforcing oppression are invisibility, distortion of events through selective presentation and re-telling of the events, stereotyping, and blaming the victim, all of which serve to obscure the continued functioning of oppression (p. 13). This makes oppression very difficult to see and thus to change, even on as small a scale as within one's own mind.

All manifestations of oppression affect students in higher education today. Students come to higher education bringing with them their experiences from the world outside, and still may face unnecessary barriers, inadequate support, or hostile attitudes in their learning environment.

“Each one of us is responsible for all of humankind. We need to think of each other as true brothers and sisters, and to be concerned with each other’s welfare” (The Dalai Lama & Hopkins, 2005, p. 5). His Holiness the Dalai Lama wrote this about the practice of expanding love and finding peace within ourselves. However, his words have a broader application. To find peace in the world, he says, is to be “motivated by compassion and love, respecting the rights of others” (p. 5). According to Thich Nhat Hanh (2003), a Buddhist monk and bestselling author, to seek peace,

We need to be calm, to see clearly what the real situation is and what it is not, and then to wake up and act with courage. Peace is not simply the absence of violence; it is the cultivation of understanding, insight, and compassion, combined with action” (p. 5).

These words were echoed, in their own voices, by the participants in this study. Most participants spoke directly about having a sense of personal responsibility to humankind, a personal responsibility to seek justice. This was accompanied by a belief that others should also feel this responsibility. As Martin Luther King, Jr. wrote, “We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly” (King, 1963, para. 4).

Higher education systems can shape and inform the leaders in our governmental, economic, educational, and other crucial societal systems, so it is vitally important that all members of society have equal chances to succeed in higher education. Student affairs professionals are in unique positions to positively or negatively affect the lives of students. Those who are sensitive to the effects of oppression and discrimination on students can much more effectively assess the

situation and the needs of those involved, and take action that is more effective, constructive, and positive for all parties. In this thesis I make arguments about the need for student affairs professionals to confront oppression in general; however, I will not promote advocating for one type of oppression over others as I believe they are all interconnected (Lorde, 2007).

Overview of this Thesis

The following chapters provide a review of pertinent literature, including a thorough definition and explanation of social justice, an explanation of the methods used in my research, and the results, which include six overall themes and five categories of attributes and skills. In the final chapter I will summarize the study and offer implications for practice and for further research.

Literature Review

I will begin this literature review with a brief overview of my search process. I then address oppression in higher education, and provide a discussion of social justice, beginning with definitions of social justice in the literature and beyond. I will present my definition of social justice and a thorough explanation of this definition. Following this, I will explore other areas of the literature, including multicultural competence, values of the profession, and student development theory related to ally development.

Search Process

Much like the challenge of defining social justice, the richness and variety of social justice practice led me to draw from many and varied types of literature. I have always enjoyed synthesizing ideas from many disciplines, and I discovered that social justice truly does have myriad roots and paths.

The categories of literature in which I searched and read included the fields of student affairs, social work, counseling, education, business, philosophy, and history. The works in these categories included overlapping pools of literature on student development; empowering pedagogy and education for K-12 and higher education systems; leadership; identity development; moral development; justice; community and relationship building; and access to education, including affirmative action in business, K-12 and higher education. While my overall search was extensive, I will focus here some key pieces of literature relating most closely to the experience of student affairs professionals who are practicing social justice.

This topic is not a new one. However, there appears to be very little evidence, empirical and otherwise, of how social justice practice works from the practitioner's standpoint. I believe I have identified a nook in which a key issue and corresponding questions arose: student affairs professionals, in their unique roles to influence access to and success during higher education, have an opportunity and – I and others argue – a duty to practice social justice within their career work. In seeking previous paths taken toward effectively practicing social justice in higher education, and due to the relative lack of empirical research in this area, I developed the question: How do student affairs professionals effectively practice social justice? My research questions, as well as data collection methods, were born of and parent to this exploration.

Oppression in Higher Education

To practice social justice, one must be able to recognize oppressive acts or situations. I will use Marilyn Frye's *The Politics of Reality: Essays in feminist theory* (Frye, 2007) to further discuss oppression and the need for social justice advocates in higher education.

I am using Suzanne Pharr's (2007) definition of oppression: all oppressions, such as racism, sexism, homophobia, are "linked through a common origin – economic power and control – and by common methods of limiting, controlling, and destroying lives" (p. 10). Critical to understanding this is Pharr's explanation of the common elements of oppressions. These begin with a defined norm, or a standard of righteousness that all others are judged in relation to. This norm must be backed up

by: 1. institutional power, 2. economic power, and 3. both institutional and individual violence. She points out that this norm does not need to represent the majority, but only those who have the ability to exert power and control over others (p. 10).

Seeing Oppression

In understanding continued social disparity, the best explanation is that people are still oppressed, despite the belief of many that this oppression is largely in the past. The trouble is that oppression is, and always has been, difficult to see (Frye, 2007). Applying Pharr's (2007) definition to circumstances can reveal an oppressive act or situation. Marilyn Frye provides another way to see oppression, using a powerful metaphor: the birdcage. This metaphor shows how all of the small incidents and assumptions that women, people of color, and others, are bombarded with on a daily basis constitute their oppressed status. When we look at one wire of the birdcage, we cannot see any reason why the bird cannot just fly around it. Even if we examine every wire individually, there does not seem to be any reason why the bird is inhibited by it. However, it is when you look at the entire cage when you understand the nature of the bird's situation. Frye states:

It is perfectly *obvious* that the bird is surrounded by a network of systematically related barriers, no one of which would be the least hindrance to its flight, but which, by their relations to each other, are as confining as the solid walls of a dungeon (Frye, 2007).

Social justice advocates attempt to dismantle this birdcage. In higher education, this includes the recognition that some students arrive with and encounter more barriers than others, and taking action in a variety of ways to reduce or remove as many of those barriers as possible.

Frye also counters the claim by some of “reverse discrimination” by pointing out that no person is free of social structures and these structures limit everyone’s freedom. This necessary social limitation does not mean that all people are oppressed:

One has to look at [a particular suffering, harm, or limitation] *in context* in order to tell whether it is an element in an oppressive structure: one has to see if it is part of an enclosing structure of forces and barriers which tends to the immobilization and reduction of a group or category of people (Frye, 2007, p. 6).

As Frye argues, one also must examine, in the case of women, whether that barrier is erected and maintained by men, for the benefit of men. When examining a practice, one must ask, “who gets what out of the practice of those disciplines, and who imposes what penalties for improper relaxations of them? What are the rewards of this self-discipline? (p. 8).” Frye gives the example of the emotional restrictions on men, and the physical restrictions on women. Other men require emotional restraint and reward it, for acting tough lets a man keep his status as a man. Women’s physical restraint is also required by men. Her restraint is not rewarded but mocked and degraded.

Summary

It is certainly not the case that oppression does not exist anymore. Although we would like to believe so, looks can be deceiving. “Since we live in a society that promotes fads and temporary superficial adaptation of different values, we are easily convinced that changes have occurred in arenas where there has been little or no change” (hooks, 2000, p. 49). Oppression functions on a daily basis, through increasingly subtle forms, which we can see for ourselves by applying the frameworks above to various events. This section is aptly summed up by Johnson (2000), who said, “As long as we participate in a society that transforms difference into privilege, there is no neutral ground to stand on” (as cited in Reason & Broido, 2005, p.88).

Defining Social Justice

I turn now to a discussion of social justice. This became a substantial part of my literature review and my learning about justice, ethical treatment of others, and how I as a student affairs professional want to treat others in my life, both personally and professionally.

Finding a definition of social justice that I felt was fully encompassing of the term and academically rigorous was much more challenging than I expected. One author, writing an essay reviewing three edited books about educating for social justice, made a comment that summed up this mire quite well. Responding to the wide variety of topics and viewpoints presented in each of the books, she says,

... in part, this reflects one of the primary challenges of social justice work: its richness and variety cannot be easily reduced, and its advocates are often not speaking to each other or drawing from the same traditions (Hyttén, 2006).

I was picky in my search, looking for a definition that could hold the broad concept that is social justice, but, at the same time, give enough detail to avoid leaving the concept abstract and purely intellectual.

Presumably due to the growing usage of the term, many articles mention social justice without actually defining the term (ASHE Higher Education Report, 2006; Dean, 2007; Epstein, 2005; Redden, 2008; Weggel, 2007). Others who do define social justice use brief or indirect definitions that mention some combination of social change, the ending of oppression, personal and community transformation, conflict resolution, and the equal chances for all people to succeed (Dessel, Rogge, & Garlington, 2006; Wallace, 2000; Astin, 2004).

Wikipedia, the free online encyclopedia that encourages all logged-in viewers to contribute content, has a succinct discussion of the many meanings of social justice. It is first mentioned that “social justice refers to the concept of a society in which justice is achieved in every aspect of society, rather than merely the administration of law” (Wikipedia, n.d.). Additionally, social justice is a philosophical problem, a concept used to describe a number of social movements, and an important issue in politics and religion. People who are socially conservative also use this term, but generally believe that a free market is the key to a just society. In the context of social movements, social justice means working toward a world where all members of a

society, regardless of background, have basic human rights and an equal opportunity to access the benefits of their society, and can be defined as, “the way in which human rights are manifested in the everyday lives of people at every level of society”

(Wikipedia, n.d.).

On a different note, Edwards (2006) defines student affairs professionals who are committed to social justice as those who:

seek not only to develop their own critical consciousness and change oppressive systems within their educational institutions as transformative educators (Rhoads & Black, 1995), but also to educate students to engage in societal transformation towards a vision of social justice” (p. 40).

Out of this we can assume that the author envisions social justice as developing one’s critical consciousness, changing oppressive systems, and actively educating others to do the same.

Reason & Davis (2005) define social justice by explaining two types of justice, distributive and procedural. Distributive justice refers to the distribution of limited resources on the basis of equality, equity, or need. The equitable distribution of resources and benefits such as financial aid or admission to college is an often addressed aspect of distributive justice in higher education. Procedural justice refers to the justice process, and focuses on the influence of various groups during decision-making processes. How much input one group gives relative to others can influence the decision, making the outcomes more or less equitable for groups who are not part of or considered during the process. Generally, decision-making processes that are deemed neutral, trustworthy, and respectful of others are considered to be just.

While a discussion of justice per se is crucial, this alone cannot define social justice. A discussion of justice points out key ways in which our systems are unfair and can illustrate oppression. However, this alone does not address the institutionalized nature of oppression and cruelty, and the call to treat one another with dignity and respect.

My Definition of Social Justice

After much reading and digesting, I decided that I would need to create a new definition of social justice for the purposes of this thesis. The reason has changed as my literature review progressed. When I began, I felt that I needed to have a “standard” definition for choosing my participants and with which to compare their answers. I also needed this definition as the grounding for my discussion of oppression, privilege, and how all of this relates to student affairs. What I found was that I did not want a standard definition for choosing participants, as I explain in the Methods chapter of this thesis. I did, however, find that I still needed a solid definition to use as the grounding in which to plant the rest of this discussion.

The definition of social justice I created is as follows:

Social justice is a movement for social change, which seeks to end oppression in all its forms, whether blatant or invisible, individual or institutional; and seeks to ensure that all people be treated with dignity and respect and are welcomed with hospitality regardless of their circumstances.

This statement implies

1. The need to educate people that discrimination and oppression continue to exist on a systemic level, and that, while we did not create the world we were born into, we all have responsibility for the future condition of our world;
2. The ending or changing social systems that are cruel (cause pain, maim dignity or self-respect);
3. Implementing social systems that validate the wholeness and reality of each person, and;
4. Providing hospitality to all, on individual and systemic levels, because freely given hospitality stops the cycle of aggression and violence, restores dignity, self-respect, and hope, and allows for other possibilities to emerge.

As it developed, I found that this definition is both more and less radical than I expected it to be. It calls for major changes in how our society operates and major shifts in how most people view others. But it is essentially very simple: learning, as a society, how to value all people, treat all people with dignity, and continue to provide compassion and hospitality to all, even those people whom we do not think “deserve” this hospitality. The challenge will be to integrate these renewed values into the social systems that maintain privilege and oppression. Eventually, I found that to speak about social justice completely and truthfully, this was the most appropriate definition.

Framework

I relied on Dr. Lani Roberts' interpretation of three authors in particular to provide the framework for this definition: Philip Hallie (2007), Martin Buber (2007), and Josiah Royce (2007), (L. Roberts, PHL 280 lecture, winter term, 2007). Each of these authors, whose ideas I discuss in the following sections, provide crucial viewpoints on which this definition of social justice depends. I intend that the following discussion will help to further clarify my definition of social justice, and provide further insight into the impetus for social justice.

Cruelty and hospitality

Philip Hallie (2007) offers a unique discussion of cruelty and of goodness. He studied the Holocaust for many years, seeking to learn about "institutional cruelty" and what it would take to undo such horror. He found there are four criteria that make a particular instance of cruelty "institutional cruelty." The first criterion is substantial cruelty, which is cruelty that involves the maiming of dignity or self-respect. Hallie found that the worst forms of cruelty were not those that physically harmed a person, but those that aimed at maiming one's dignity and self-respect. Hard words are one example of this; the only function that hard words serve in our society is to harm someone. Second, this substantial cruelty is built into society, including our language, as mentioned above. Third, substantial cruelty is at the edge of awareness. All of us can see it happening, but those of us who benefit can choose not to pay attention to it and deny that it exists. Those who are the victims can blame themselves using the self-

hate they have been taught under this system. Fourth, an institutional power disparity must exist between the perpetrating group and the victims. Institutional power refers to one groups' dominance in economic, political, religious, social, and educational systems.

According to Hallie, the opposite of cruelty is not kindness or the removal of cruelty, but hospitality. Kindness can be the ultimate cruelty when it is given in an imbalanced power relationship. This type of kindness reinforces and accentuates the imbalance of power and the existing cruelty. The opposite of cruelty is also not the removal of the cruel relationship. Cruelty can exist in the survivors long after the acts of cruelty themselves are over. People who have suffered from cruelty have lost their dignity and self-respect, and have been made to see themselves as less than human. Offering unsentimental, effective love to those who have suffered cruelty has the power to return one's dignity and self-respect, those characteristics that were most harmed by the cruelty suffered. (Hallie, 2007; Roberts, PHL 280 lecture, winter term, 2007)

In thinking about hospitality, I felt that this is a large injunction, one that many people in U.S. society may have a hard time connecting with, and which needs slightly more explanation here. For example, how can we get to providing hospitality when we do not feel a conviction to help all people, or feel that some people do not deserve the chance to be welcomed in this way? One answer I found was offered in a short article about the U.S.' prison-industrial complex, written from a Christian perspective and using the language of mercy. The author discussed punishment and redemption,

saying, "... mercy is not mercy if it is offered to those who deserve it" (Hastings Sehested, 2007). She explained that mercy is not given out of the goodness of our hearts, nor is it going "soft on crime" or ignoring the brutalities of the world. Rather, it is an interruption of our unceasing round of punishment and retaliation. It appeals to the possibility to transform broken lives, a way of radically opening up another future, a path other than that of hate. It is to this other path that mercy and hospitality speak, and toward which social justice strives.

There is much institutional cruelty that exists in the world today. This cruelty is subtle, but can be seen when examined under a lens such as the one Hallie provides. I believe that this type of cruelty is what the social justice movements I am concerned with are seeking to end. Thus, the definition I constructed discusses both the need to end institutional cruelty and oppression, and the positive injunction to heal the wounds created by cruelty, by providing true hospitality for others.

Valuing the whole

Why provide hospitality, or even mercy, to all people? One answer to this question can be found when we discover how to value each person as a whole. When we see other people as real and whole as ourselves, it becomes much more difficult to harm them.

To seek social justice is also to seek ways to validate the wholeness and uniqueness of all people. If we cannot do this, we will find ourselves continually dividing into factions and hating the people on the other side of the line we do not

realize we have drawn. However, if we can recognize one another as whole beings, unique and individual, we will find no lines with which to divide one from another.

Martin Buber addresses this issue of parts and wholes in his book, *I and Thou* (Buber, 2007). Buber explains that there are two ways to see oneself, and these correspond with how one views others:

The attitude of man is twofold, in accordance with the twofold nature of the primary words which he speaks.

The primary words are not isolated words, but combined words.

The one primary word is the combination *I-Thou*.

The other primary word is the combination *I-It*; wherein, without a change in the primary word, one of the words *He* and *She* can replace *It*.

Hence, the *I* of man is also twofold.

For the *I* of the primary word *I-Thou* is a different *I* from that of the primary word *I-It* (p. 1).

We commonly view another person as an “It,” a fragmented being, made up of their gender, religion, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, diet, and many other factors. This system allows us to stereotype others, and often prevents those stereotypes from being checked for accuracy. As Roberts explained, the ingredients of a pie do not in and of themselves make a pie, and individual traits of people do not make a person. For example, when a white woman looks at another *person* and sees a *black man*, she is seeing that person as an “It,” a fragmented being whose parts obscure their wholeness. *I-It* pairs are inseparable, and by viewing the man as “It,” the white woman automatically must look at herself in the same way – as white, as a woman, etcetera (PHL 280 lecture, winter term, 2007).

On the other hand, when the primary word *I-Thou* is used, we are recognizing the wholeness of another, and thus of ourselves. “If I face a human being as my *Thou*, and say the primary word *I-Thou* to him, he is not a thing among things, and does not consist of things” (p. 2).

Using the primary word of *I-It* is a damaging way to see oneself and others, as this framework allows a person to evaluate others based on pieces of who they are, and rank those pieces hierarchically. This dichotomous and hierarchical thinking allows us to hate others based on one aspect of who they are, and prevents us from viewing another person as a whole individual, whose sum is greater than the whole of her parts. Buber wrote:

So long as love is ‘blind,’ that is, so long as it does not see a *whole* being, it is not truly under the sway of the primary word of relation. Hate is by nature blind. Only a part of a being can be hated (p. 3).

Another author who addresses the issue of wholeness is Josiah Royce, whose essay, “The Moral Insight” was published in 1885 (Royce, 2007). According to Royce, there is a moral insight that can inform us as to our duties to one another. This is not sympathy, which is a mere impulse, although sympathy can lead us to this insight. The moral insight is that our neighbor is as real as ourselves, they are a center of experience and desire just as we are. Royce writes,

Take what thou knowest of desire and of striving, of burning love and of fierce hatred, realize as fully as thou canst what that means, and then with clear certainty add: *Such that it is for me, so it is for him, nothing less* (p. 19).

As one of my participants said, everyone wants to be heard, even if they are not understood. Every person essentially wants the same thing, which is to be affirmed as a valuable person. Royce might ask: Can a rational adult choose to harm someone when they know the humanity and reality of the other? Using Buber's and Royce's frameworks, we can draw the conclusion that if we can learn to view one another as whole people, social *injustice* would make very little sense, and finding hospitality within ourselves would be that much easier (Roberts, PHL 280 lecture, winter term, 2007).

Breadth of Definition

Pope, Reynolds, and Mueller (2004) mention the debate about narrower versus broader definitions of multiculturalism: some express concern that "broader definitions [of multiculturalism] can undermine efforts to eliminate racism" (p. xiii). This argument can also be applied to definitions of social justice: for whom are we seeking justice? This may certainly be true when definitions are interpreted differently than intended, or when the focus on a broad definition allows a group of people to ignore or marginalize the needs of other oppressed groups.

The definition I created does not specify any specific groups of people, but rather outlines a way of treating others that, if followed, would ideally eliminate all oppressions. I also believe that instead of an *either/or* mentality, a *both/and* mentality can be much more productive, meaning that it is possible to work toward undoing oppression overall and still focus on a specific group.

This definition comes from an ethical standpoint rather than one of blind justice. One research study found that approaching social justice from an ethical standpoint has a direct, positive impact on the attitudes, opinions, and behaviors of learners toward racism (Prasad, 2005). Some may find this definition unhelpful in advocating for a specific cause. However, I believe that it is important to be able to look at the larger picture and to see clearly what it is for which we strive.

Summary

In this section I have presented and discussed a variety of definitions of social justice. I then turn to my construction of a definition of social justice. I wrote this definition because I could not find one that I felt was complete and thorough enough for the purposes of this thesis. I then explain the ramifications of this definition as I see them, and go into details about the framework of the definition, which rests on the writings of three philosophers. I also address one potential point of contention about of this definition, which is its unconventionally wide breadth.

Multicultural Competence

In addressing social justice in higher education, it appeared to be appropriate to also do some research and reading about multicultural competence. Multicultural competence is an important tool to use in social justice practice, and has more literature on the topic than does social justice. What I found was that this pool of literature weaves themes of social justice throughout the description of multicultural

competence. As this concept is different than that of social justice, however, I do not focus on it in this thesis.

The book *Multicultural Competence in Student Affairs*, by Pope, Reynolds, and Mueller (2004), is a comprehensive work on this topic. They begin by introducing seven core competencies that are each the subject of their own chapter. These are: 1. administration and management, 2. theory and translation, 3. helping and interpersonal, 4. ethical and legal, 5. teaching and training, 6. assessment and evaluation, and 7. multicultural awareness, knowledge, and skills. These are synthesized into the Dynamic Model of Student Affairs Competence, a figure depicting a wheel. Each competency has its own segment, but the lines do not meet in the middle, as each flows into the others. They then address multicultural competence specifically, dedicating the next six chapters to discussing how multicultural competence should be imbedded throughout all the student affairs competencies.

The categories of awareness, knowledge, and skills form a matrix of the “Characteristics of a Multiculturally Competent Student Affairs Practitioner (p. 18-19). These categories also appear to emerge in much of the literature I have read and in the personal accounts of the participants in my study. These are included in the themes I identified in my results. I do believe that there is much overlap between the concepts of social justice and multicultural competence. The distinction between these two concepts appears to be the emphasis on different aspects of resisting oppression.

In summary, although the importance of having multicultural competence was mentioned by several participants as a tool to use in the pursuit of social justice, I am

not focusing on it in this thesis. Rather, I am intentionally focusing on social justice to the exclusion of some of the complexity of the concept of multicultural competence. This is because I believe that social justice is a bolder way of thinking about working with others and creating change in our social systems.

Values of the Profession

The current values of the student affairs profession inform us as to what a student affairs professional should be knowledgeable about and how they should interact with and advocate for students. These values, outlined by Robert Young (as cited in Komives, Woodard & Assoc., 2003), include individual, contextual, and care dimensions. For individuals, these values include individuation or growth, wholeness, uniqueness, experience, and responsibility. The values of the context include community, equality, and justice. Caring links the individual to the context and includes altruism, service, and developing care in students for society. These values are very important to the profession, and are emphasized in many professional ethical codes. For example, *The CAS Professional Standards for Higher Education* (2006) contains several sets of professional values. The CAS Guiding Principles includes “Diversity and Multiculturalism” as one of its five categories (p. 8). The CAS Statement of Shared Ethical Principles has eight principles, several of which apply here. These include non-maleficence, “we pledge to do no harm,” beneficence, “we engage in altruistic attitudes and actions that promote goodness and contribute to the health and welfare of others,” justice, “we actively promote human dignity and

endorse equality and fairness for everyone,” fidelity, “we are faithful to an obligation, trust, or duty,” and affiliation, “we actively promote connected relationships among all people and foster community” (p. 20-21).

These ethical statements demonstrate the importance that these values have for both student affairs professionals and the institutions that employ them. Implicit in these values is the assumption that the highest quality professionals are indeed doing what it takes to best serve their students. Students are best served when they are understood, not only for who they are as individuals, but also for the contexts in which they have been raised. For example, in our sexist society it is important to have knowledge about the oppression of women and how that oppression impacts the students with whom one is working; otherwise, the root of many conduct issues may go unaddressed. The current values of student affairs professionals do include equality, justice, and care, which are all crucial for an intricate understanding of oppression and how to effectively respond. The issue, then, becomes whether this deep understanding is adequately applied in practice.

In summary, it appears that the values of the student affairs profession state that student affairs professionals should understand and effectively practice at least some aspects of social justice. Based on these values, Evans and Reason’s 2001 paper calls for student affairs professionals to examine themselves and work toward actively practicing social justice (as cited in Broido & Reason, 2005).

Social Justice Ally Development

Most of the literature I located about social justice in higher education had to do with social justice ally development. The majority of this literature related to various aspects of social justice ally development in students. These articles summarize the student development theory related to student's ally development, including identity development and cognitive development theory. I will provide a synopsis of these articles as they provide a framework for student affairs professionals' work with students. They also articulate the current understanding of the role of social justice allies from the point of view of student development literature. I also located one article that spoke directly to the student affairs professional's role in this development, which I will summarize at greater length.

Identity and Cognitive Development

Student ally development is a branch of identity development theory (Evans, Forney, & Guido-DiBrito, 1998; Levine & Evans (1991), Josselson, 1987; Wijeyesingh & Jackson, 2001, among others). Identity development theories range from the general, such as Jones and McEwen's (2000) *A Conceptual Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity*, to specific, for example, Thom and Coetzee's (2004) article entitled *Identity development of South African adolescents in a democratic society.* These theories examine the process of identity formation. They generally show identity development as a process where individuals move through more or less

concrete stages, and are sometimes described to revert or cycle through these stages.

Social justice and related theories also have this type of stage model.

Another important point here is that identity, much like racial categories, is socially constructed (Evans, et. al., 1998; Omi & Winant, 1994; West, 2002), requiring an interplay between internal and external influences. Gaining an understanding of this process can interrupt the “hegemonic assumption that people get what they deserve” (p. 8). Reason and Davis (2005) explain:

Hegemony is essentially ‘the maintenance of domination not by the sheer exercise of force but primarily through consensual social practices, social forms, and social structures’ (McLaren, 1998, p. 182). ... For a social justice ally to be successful, ... , unconscious complicity with hegemonic individualism needs to be interrupted (p. 8-9).

This concept is important for individuals to grasp, because, to be a social justice ally, one needs to evaluate where one stands in relation to the hegemonic forces that operate in our society. It is also critical to understand the impact that social environments have on us, including our living and learning environments. This awareness opens the door for shared understanding that leads to successful intergroup interactions (p. 9).

Identity development overlaps with cognitive development, which comes with its own set of theories (Baxter Magolda, 1992; Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986; Love & Guthrie, 1999; Perry, 1999). These theories illustrate the internal organization of knowledge, from simple to complex, concrete to abstract,

reliance on external authority to internal agency, and need for clear-cut answers to being comfortable with uncertainty and doubt (Reason & Davis, 2005). Students in the beginning stages, such as Perry's dualism, want clear-cut answers, look to authority figures for answers, and are uncomfortable with uncertainty. As students move out of this stage, they gain a greater ability to deal with less concrete concepts and typically tend to view knowledge and authority more subjectively. It is here that, as a result of these changes, individuals are also said to develop a greater understanding of their own subjective biases and of concepts such as privilege and oppression (Reason & Davis, 2005, p. 11). Another pertinent feature of cognitive development theories is that they discuss the cognitive dissonance that is generally required to shift people to one stage from another. This cognitive dissonance can be threatening, requiring emotional effort to resolve the dissonance. If students choose to avoid this kind of emotional work, they likewise may not progress in their understanding of social justice. As Reason and Davis point out, cognitive development stages should be considered by educators when choosing strategies to increase student's awareness and understanding of social justice. This will increase the education's likelihood to be effective.

Student Ally Development

Ally development includes topics such as racial justice ally development (Reason, Scales, & Roosa Millar, 2005; Reason, Roosa Millar, & Scales, 2005), men's, and heterosexual students' development of social justice attitudes and actions

(Davis & Wagner, 2005; Evans & Broido, 2005), and disability allies (Evans, Assadi, & Harriott, 2005). In general, these articles discuss the general development of allies, issues of being an ally for that particular group, and strategies for taking action. These articles are written for student affairs professionals, so also have suggestions for student affairs professionals who are trying to develop students as allies. While ally behavior will look slightly different for each group, each of these articles has commonalities as well. Here I will address those commonalities, hoping to provide an overall picture of these theories in relationship to student affairs professionals.

Attitude was one of the commonalities between most of the articles on ally development. An article on disability ally development spoke at length about attitudes and the possible ramifications, both positive and negative, which can result from one's attitude toward people with disabilities (Evans, et al., 2005). It is important, that, as a first step, people work to actively recognize the views that they hold and challenge them. Being aware of one's attitudes can include looking closely at one's reasons for being an ally, and always treating people as equals deserving of respect (Davis & Wagner, 2005; Evans, et al., 2005; Evans & Broido, 2005; Reason, Scales, et al., 2005).

Learning was another commonality. It was expressed by all of the authors I cite here that learning was a crucial function of becoming a true ally. This includes gaining more understanding about the issues of specific groups of people, dispelling stereotypes and myths, and learning about how oppression has impacted them. It was also expressed that continuing to learn should be a function of all student affairs

professionals, both learning about the experiences of targeted groups and the experiences of students who are trying to be allies (Davis & Wagner, 2005; Evans, et al., 2005; Evans & Broido, 2005; Reason, Scales, et al., 2005). Educating was another function student affairs professionals should perform, however, one should not teach what one doesn't understand, or the situation will likely worsen (Bishop, 2002).

Awareness, another commonality, means acknowledging moments of privilege or oppression, then raising awareness about them. Examining and being aware of one's personal role in the situation, both historically and currently, helps for individuals to contextualize oppression and how it may have operated, unseen, in their own lives. This is powerful, as this type of awareness takes courage and can create profound realizations (Davis & Wagner, 2005; Evans, et al., 2005; Evans & Broido, 2005; Reason, Scales, et al., 2005).

Direct action, the final significant commonality between these articles that I identified, involves taking direct action on behalf of the targeted group. Examples of this action are supporting people from that group in taking leadership roles, making sure one's home is accessible to people with disabilities, and using terms like "partner" instead of "girlfriend" or "boyfriend." All of these authors stated plainly that it was the responsibility of student affairs professionals to develop their own ally identities, serve as role models, and encourage students to do the same (Davis & Wagner, 2005; Evans, et al., 2005; Evans & Broido, 2005; Reason, Scales, et al., 2005). In speaking about action, Reason, Scales, et al. said "redefining whiteness is not a process through which you lead students but one through which you travel *with*

students” (p. 62). This statement can easily be extrapolated, as the process of becoming an ally can be long and full of challenges for both students and student affairs professionals. It also calls attention to the social construction of our world, and especially of racial categories.

Issues and Strategies for Student Affairs Allies

An important work entitled *Issues and Strategies for Social Justice Allies (and the Student Affairs Professional Who Hope to Encourage Them)* (Reason & Broido, 2005), speaks directly to the student affairs professional’s role in the development of allies. This is not an empirically based article, but a reflective one on the part of the authors, who are researchers and professors in student services programs. They discuss self-understanding, ally actions, and difficulties and obstacles to ally work, and how to find your place at the table. Along with each category, they provide a list of concrete actions that allies can take to further their abilities in each area.

Self-understanding is not required for social justice ally action, but does provide “the foundation on which sustainable ally identity and actions are built” (p. 82). In light of the difficulties that an ally identity generates, allies must have some degree of confidence and clarity of purpose. This confidence and clarity comes from a deep understanding of the self, which is “understanding based on continuous critical reflection into the roles of power and privilege in one’s life and relationships” (p. 81), and one’s multiple identities, which may contain both dominant and marginalized aspects.

Reason & Broido (2005) describe ally actions as encompassing three components: inspiring and educating dominant group members, creating institutional and cultural change, and supporting target group membership (p. 81). They recognize that these categories overlap considerably, but believe that, for the purposes of the discussion, it is helpful to separate them.

Inspiring and educating dominant group members is a critical area of ally work. They point out that most people do not want to be agents of oppression, but lack awareness about their oppressive actions or knowledge about how to act differently. Simply sharing information or pointing out discriminatory practices to increase awareness can allow situations or experiences to speak for themselves. Additionally, expecting and inviting students to participate in ally work is a critical way to get students to take the first step toward exhibiting persistent ally actions (Reason & Broido, 2005, p. 83-85).

Creating institutional and cultural change is critical, especially for those in upper administration who have more institutional power than others. “These student affairs professionals share a responsibility to influence change on their campuses (Evans & Reason, 2001)—not only to intervene at the individual student level, but also to create environments in which all students, including social justice allies, can flourish” (Reason & Broido, p. 85). It is important here to remember that sometimes silence is the correct answer, because it is time to listen to and learn from others.

Supporting target group members is another crucial aspect to being an ally. The authors point out how important one-on-one support, witness, and advocacy can

be. This is not a way to excuse students from doing the work for which they should be responsible. However, sometimes allies can use their greater amount of social power to call for change. Additionally, bearing witness to target group members' experiences can be powerful, as these experiences are often misconstrued or ignored by members of dominant groups (Reason & Broido, p. 85-86).

Reason & Broido address the difficulties and obstacles that arise for social justice allies. First, they acknowledge that an ally identity is hard to maintain. There are many difficulties associated with being an ally, including being considered divisive, traitorous, exacerbating differences; being ostracized from dominant groups; and feeling isolated. Conversely, persistence in all aspects of being an ally is very important. Giving up when a situation becomes difficult sends a negative message to targeted group members and can reinforce mistrust between groups. Some strategies they mention are finding like-minded peers, being forgiving and having compassion for selves and others, and admitting and learning from mistakes.

Finally, Reason & Broido discuss the question: what right do we have to do this work (p. 88)? They emphasize that it is important for each individual to navigate the balance between speaking up, being silent to listen, and stepping back to allow for targeted group member to speak for their own liberation. It is important to avoid co-opting a movement as threatens to make targeted group members feel voiceless, helpless, and frustrated. Allies, the authors claim, are a vital part of social movements. Those in power need to "recognize injustice and begin to fight against the structures

that maintain their power. Through our work in helping students develop as allies and in our own ally work, we move forward in that struggle” (p. 88).

Summary

In this section I have outlined the student development theory that relates to ally development. This includes identity development and cognitive development theory. I also summarized the literature on social justice ally development, which speaks to social justice overall, and to specific oppressions such as racism and sexism. These articles often relate the student’s development to what student affairs professionals can do to facilitate this movement. Finally, I discuss one article that speaks directly to student affairs professionals, which I found helpful for the conceptualization of my research.

Summary of Literature Review

In this literature review I have given an overview of my search process, and discussed five broad areas of literature that relate to this thesis. These areas are: oppression, defining social justice, multicultural competence, the values of student affairs, and social justice ally development. These topics were all influential in my learning and the development of this research. Although much more literature could be summarized here, I believe that this provides a framework for this thesis and shows a gap where my research is applicable.

Methods

In this chapter I will discuss, in detail, the methods I used in my research process. I will begin by discussing my theoretical framework – my beliefs about knowledge – which influences my understanding of the purpose of research. I will address the context of the research, including location and time frame. I will discuss the participants in detail, from my method of and criteria for identifying participants to the participants themselves. I will describe my data collection, which includes written and interview data. Finally, I will describe my data analysis process.

Theoretical Framework

I hold a largely constructivist view of knowledge, meaning that things are real for the individual perceiving them. Truth is subjective, but I believe that groups of people create truths that come close to universal through the social structures they create. I find value in both quantitative and qualitative research, but due to the nature of my questions, this will be a completely qualitative study using verbal data from participants.

Research Context

The data collection took place at a large public university in the Pacific Northwest (“the university”). This land-grant institution includes diversity, social responsibility, integrity, and respect in its mission and values. The data collection occurred during January through March of 2008.

Participants

In this section I will discuss my sampling process, criteria for participants, and participant selection. I conclude with a brief description of each participant.

I used snowball sampling to identify data-rich participants. Data-rich participants are those who will be most useful in contributing the data I wish to study; the criteria for participants are described below. To do this, I contacted several student affairs personnel at the university with whom I am familiar and asked them to refer me to their colleagues who they believed would meet the criteria. Emails were sent to potential participants to request their participation, including follow-up emails to people I did not hear from one way or the other (see Appendix A for template emails).

I began my search for participants by talking with several student affairs professionals with whom I already had a good working relationship. I also knew they had both a social justice perspective (as I defined it in Chapter 1), and good judgment. I compiled a list of possible participants and began contacting them. I initially emailed five people, and received four replies right away. Based on who replied, I contacted other potential participants, aiming for as diverse a sample as I could find.

Listed here are the criteria for participants. Participants should be experienced in the field of student affairs, which was measured by those who have been in working full-time in student affairs or related positions for at least ten years. The professionals self-identified as social justice advocates, meaning people who are thoughtful about social justice issues and about integrating social justice into their careers. For a

definition of social justice, please refer to the Introduction. Additionally, they must have been directly involved in resolving a crisis or conflict around difference or diversity on at least one occasion during the course of their career.

I will include a note here about participant criteria. I intended to select participants based upon a pre-determined definition of social justice by asking participants to self-identify with that specific definition. Ultimately I found this unhelpful. Although definitions of social justice vary greatly, most have a general undercurrent of creating change toward justice for all, and all people who choose to integrate this intent into their work will have stories to contribute to the general discussion of effective social justice practice in the field of student affairs. Thus, I simply relied on participants to self-identify as social justice advocates, and asked them for their definition in the interview. I verified their self-identification by directly asking potential participants to respond to my email if they “feel that they fit these criteria” (Appendix B).

I was able to confirm five participants who met the required criteria after extending the time I had originally allotted for this process. I would have preferred to have several more participants but my time-frame would not allow this. Following Institutional Review Board (IRB) protocol, I obtained signed consent forms from each participant prior to any data collection. As part of the IRB consent document, I agreed to keep the identities of the participants confidential.

I attempted to contact as diverse of a group of people as possible, considering functional area, gender, sexuality, and ethnicity. I intentionally did not ask participants

to disclose any demographic information, so I am not able to comprehensively report that here other than what participants chose to disclose. I did this because I thought that, while interesting, separating answers by demographics was not my goal for this project. Additionally, I will not disclose the functional area where they worked as this could potentially identify the participants.

I asked the participants to choose their own pseudonyms. They are: Aggie, a white, lesbian woman; Charles, a white man; Crystal, a Native American woman; Oneforpeace, an Asian American woman; and Porter, a white man. All but two came from different functional areas within student affairs, and all but one had some degree of managerial duties.

Data Collection

Here I will outline my data collection methods, then write individually about the two types of data I gathered. There were two parts to the data collection: written data and interviews. I developed the interview and written questions based on my research questions. I then piloted the questions. After two mock interviews, I made slight changes to the questions and added a preface to the questions, explaining my research and intent. I then had another mock interview with a third person. After making a few more slight changes, I felt confident that the questions would elicit the data I was looking for.

To solicit data from participants, I began by emailing those people who chose to participate in my study, including as attachments the IRB consent document and the

written and interview questions with a note to further explain my research study (see Appendix C for email template).

Written Data

For the written data portion, I asked participants to answer several questions in written form. The main question was, “Please describe a conflict or crisis around an issue of difference or diversity between groups or individuals that you resolved in the course of your job duties,” with follow up questions asking, “A. During this narrative, please describe the motivations that guided you while attempting to find and reach a resolution,” and, “B. Additionally, please briefly state whether or not you felt your actions were aligned with your institution’s stated mission and values, and why.”

Participants had the option of submitting their written answers at the interview or afterward at an agreed-upon time. I planned to analyze this data for examples of what skills are needed to successfully navigate these complex situations. I had concerns that adding this data collection method along with the interview would be too time-consuming for my participants; however, the benefit of using this additional method was that it would allow me to increase the reliability of my results by comparing both sets of data.

Unfortunately, this did not go as well as I had hoped. I received two written stories at the interview. Three participants did not have their written story completed by the interview date and agreed to contact me when they were done. One participant emailed their written story to me. One participant burned their document onto a CD,

but I was unable to open the document. After following up, I was not able to obtain two of the written documents.

Ultimately, I chose not to use any written data in my results. I had more than enough data from the interviews, so I believe that the incomplete written data will not significantly enrich my findings. There was interesting data relating to congruence with the university's mission, but, since this small amount of data does not answer any of my research questions, I will leave it to a further study to analyze and look into.

Interviews

I interviewed each participant once, resulting in five interview data-sets. I used semi-structured interviews, considering the questions to be prompts, and followed, to the best of my ability, the one-on-one interviewing procedures outlined by Creswell (2005). I talked very little, and allowed the participants to answer the open-ended questions in the ways that best made sense to them. As I noted previously, I emailed the participants the interview questions as soon as they agreed to participate, along with the IRB consent form. This was to allow each participant time to reflect on the questions before our actual interview.

I requested of each participant that they choose the meeting place for the interview, and this was their personal office in each case. I did this to ensure that they were comfortable in the location in which we would be talking. This also allowed for maximum privacy and quiet.

The interviews lasted between 15 to 77 minutes depending on the participant's schedule, length of answers, and speaking style, with an average length of 45 minutes. The interview that lasted the longest was with a participant who was interrupted several times and also had a story-telling style of speaking. The interview that was the shortest actually had to be re-recorded due to an error with the recording device (it may have been accidentally bumped which stopped the recording). The "first" interview with this participant lasted about 25-30 minutes due to her succinct and direct answers. The "second" one was shorter because the participant had voiced the answers once already and was able to respond faster. Although several interviews had a pre-set time-limit of one hour, the interviews themselves were easily finished within the allotted time. I would have loved to have second interviews with each participant, but due to time constraints I was unable to consider doing this. By the time all of the initial interviews were completed, I was already due to begin analyzing the data according to my timeline.

I recorded each interview using a digital audio recorder and used a transcription service to transcribe the data. The transcriptionist signed a confidentiality form before receiving any data and who used a secure server to upload and download data.

Data Analysis

In this section I will briefly discuss my coding framework, then describe, step-by-step, my coding process. I will conclude this section with a note about my personal

experience with this process and level of confidence in the themes that were generated.

Coding Framework

I based my coding techniques on those outlined by Creswell (2005). Due to the nature of qualitative data analysis, this was a highly subjective process. I coded the data in the ways that made the most sense to me, keeping in mind a constructivist grounded theory framework. Grounded theory is generally intended to generate a theory, however, this is not my goal. Another use, according to Creswell (2005), is “when you wish to study some process ... explain an action of people, ... or an interaction among people” (p. 396). From constructivist grounded theory I am borrowing a coding method that allows themes to emerge from the data as I code, rather than having predetermined categories (Creswell, p. 402). I also made sure to check back to my original transcripts at several points in the process and to use participants’ own words whenever possible as the titles of the themes and sub-themes, processes which are also characteristic of constructivist grounded theory (Creswell, p. 404, 406). These processes allowed me to remain as true as possible to my participants’ stories while keeping them confidential. To my knowledge from the literature, a study very similar to this one has not been done before, so I felt that it was crucial that the themes emerge from the data rather than having predetermined themes into which I code the data. Also, as constructivist design does, I do not expect to end

my thesis with a complete model or conclusive statements, but with some potential themes and with more questions for further study.

Data Analysis Process

I began my data analysis process by listening to the interviews while reading the transcripts that I received from the transcriptionist service. I carefully corrected anything that had been mis-transcribed, resulting in transcripts that were verbatim except for a few minor places where the recording was unclear. These few unclear gaps are noted in the transcripts and did not hinder or otherwise influence my coding of the data.

In the first round of coding, I searched the transcripts for any data that answered my research questions. I coded using four highlighters for the four different research questions. In “round two,” I wrote all the words and phrases I that I had highlighted in word documents, one document for each participant. The words and phrases were separated by answers to the research questions. This meant that some words and phrases were used several times, once in each category. For round three of coding, I selected one of these “round two” documents at random and pulled out key words and phrases, writing them down. I then grouped these words and phrases into larger themes. I checked the themes by doing this again with another randomly selected “round two” document. I wrote these themes on index cards and coded each with a different color marker.

After identifying these themes, I began round four of coding by going back and printing out fresh copies of the “round two” documents I had previously written on. I went through all of the “round two” documents six times, one time through all of the documents for each theme. I coded each word or phrase associated with a theme with the appropriate colored dot. After finishing a theme’s coding on one document, I wrote down “sub-themes” of that theme on the index card associated with it. As I went, I cross checked each sub-theme with all the other documents, and counted to see if that sub-theme was mentioned by each person. I checked the resulting themes against the original transcripts to ensure that this process was done to the best of my ability and remained grounded in the data. These themes and sub-themes are represented in Table 1, found in the Results chapter.

Due to my cross-checking process, each sub-theme has a number between two and five, depending on how many participants mentioned a specific topic or idea covered by that sub-theme. I did not keep sub-themes that were mentioned by only one person, and deleted most sub-themes mentioned by only two people; I will discuss variances to this in the Results chapter. In some cases I referred back to the transcripts to get more detail or confirm if a sub-category was indeed mentioned or not.

After this, I did a fifth round of coding as I examined the sub-themes for answers to the research questions. As I explored the meaning of attributes versus skills, I noticed that often the attributes and skills corresponded with one another; for example, a participant would mention the importance of hearing all voices, and also discuss active listening many times. Thus, I was able to arrange the data into a table

(see Table 2 in the Results chapter). Table 2 shows the attributes and skills common to most participants, organized into five categories.

I used the sub-themes already stated in Table 1, however, some sub-themes I combined or worded slightly differently to make more sense in the context of Table 2. Also, not all sub-themes are listed on Table 2, as not all of them are attributes or skills. I cross-checked with the original data and with the previous rounds of coding and made adjustments to ensure these new categories were still true to the data. As I separated the attributes and skills, these categories seemed to form naturally. Several of the titles use my words rather than the participants', which gets away from the coding I did previously using participants' words for the category names.

I would like to state that, because I used the sub-themes from Table 1, the only attributes and skills included in Table 2 were those that were common to at least three participants, with one exception (noted on Table 1.) Many more skills and attributes were apparent from the interviews, but were excluded from this table because they were not common among most participants.

Reflection on the Process

This process turned out to be more difficult than I anticipated, especially as I recognized my own biases surfacing in the back of my mind as I chose which words and phrases to highlight and which themes and sub-themes to keep or delete. I double checked the coding and asked questions of my data several times when I felt my biases may be showing. The process of checking my themes and categories against the

transcripts helped me to feel more confident with the resulting themes and sub-themes for Table 1, and categories for Table 2.

The themes I identified were not *all* of the themes that could have arisen from the data. However, in my interpretation the final themes were the ones that came up the most often and the most strongly. Also, the sub-themes and categories that I identified and chose to group together may be done differently than others would have identified or grouped them; I believe that this is part of the nature of qualitative research. Certainly, much more research can be done in this area, including validation of the themes, sub-themes, and categories as I identified them.

Methodological Limitations

I will outline here some of the limitations of my methodology. The number of participants is, in my view, the largest limitation of this study. As I coded the data I believe that the categories were reaching saturation, meaning that any more data would not generate new categories, but confirm the existing ones. However, it is very possible that new participants would have informed us about other ways of approaching social justice, thus changing or adding more themes. Also, I was not able to confirm any men of color as participants, which diminishes the richness of perspective of the data.

Due to the fact that I was unable to use the written data, I was not able to thoroughly cross-check the themes that I generated from the interviews. This means that my results will be less valid than if I had been able to corroborate them with

another form of data. However, as I discussed earlier, I believe that their inclusion would not have significantly enriched the findings.

A limitation of using interviews is that the participants need to be able to articulate themselves clearly in a spoken session with a limited amount of time. I believe that because all of my participants were student affairs professionals who have to be able to articulate themselves in many different forums, this was not likely to have a negative influence on the data.

As I have already noted, my coding process is subjective and likely could have been done several different ways. I believe that this does not negate the fact that the themes I identified were there, but that others could class them or arrange them differently. Further limitations of this thesis will be discussed in the Chapter 5.

Summary of Methods

In this chapter I have described my methodology in detail. I hold a constructivist view of knowledge, which influences my beliefs about the nature of research. I describe the research context, a large public university. I then discuss my participant selection process, criteria, and the five participants themselves. Following this is a discussion of my data collection methods, which consist of written stories and interviews, and my data analysis procedures, including a note about my personal process and the subjective nature of the conclusions drawn.

Results

My research questions were: How do student affairs professionals define social justice, in the context of higher education? How do student affairs professionals come to be oriented toward social justice practice? What are the attributes of student affairs professionals who have integrated social justice practice into their professional practice? What essential skills are necessary to practice social justice in student affairs?

In this chapter, I will first talk about each theme that emerged from the data, then turn to the research questions stated above, addressing how the themes answered the questions.

Each participant had a different take on the questions I asked, a different journey to practicing social justice, and a different perspective on their approach to social justice. This individuality cannot be adequately reflected here, although I will discuss it further in the answers to the research questions. Despite this, there was a large amount of similarity between all participants, and this resulted in the creation of the themes and sub-themes.

The Themes

I interviewed five student affairs professionals. After coding the results, I identified six themes, each with between five and fourteen sub-themes. These are listed in Table 1, with a number indicating the number of participants who stated a

word or idea captured by each sub-theme. I will discuss each theme in general, and then move into the ways in which each theme addressed the research questions.

The themes are: Truth, Justice, and the American way; Activism; Personal Experience and Commitment; Mindfulness; Education; and Communication. They loosely pair together, as Justice and Activism, Personal Experience and Mindfulness, and Education and Communication. The titles of the themes and sub-themes used the participants' words as often as possible, while still attempting to be as succinct as possible. For example the theme "Truth, Justice, and the American Way" was a theme about justice that was strongly emphasized many times during Oneforpeace's interview. Instead of "awareness," I used the term "mindfulness," which came up several times in Aggie's interview.

Table 1

Themes and Sub-themes from the Interviews

Themes	Sub-themes	Number of participants
Truth, justice, and the American way	Drive to create change	5
	Feeling of social responsibility	5
	Providing support, kindness	5
	Aware of injustices	5

	Belief in fairness, equity, same	
	kinds of rights for all	4
	Allowing all voices to be present	4
Activism	Educating others	5
	Using humanizing processes	5
	Building relationships, supporting	
	and affirming others	5
	Integrating social justice into job	
	and higher education	5
	Questioning and challenging	5
	Standing up / speaking up	4
	Seeking change	4
	Recognizing privilege and power	3
	Keeping issues at the forefront	3
	Using dialogue	3
	Making sure everyone has a voice	2*

Personal Experience and

Commitment

Transformative, powerful, and/or emotive experiences	5
Social justice as a foundational principle	5
Keeping up your work: persistence	5
Self-awareness	5
Challenging others	5
Responsibility of self and others	4
It's a journey: pursuing knowledge	4
Challenging yourself	4
Skills developed along the way	4
Finding affirmation	3

Mindfulness

Self-awareness	5
Noticing and questioning surroundings	5
Inclusiveness	5
Aware of behavior as well as words	4
Aware of privilege and underlying circumstances	4

Education	Educating students	5
	Belief that no social justice shot or panacea exists	5
	Pursuing knowledge	4
	Learning from others outside of the classroom	4
	Thinking critically	4
	Reflecting on learning	3
	Belief in education as method to facilitate social justice	3
	Communication	Listening / hearing
	Creating welcoming environments	5
	Speaking up, making a point	5
	Having conversations	5
	Aware of non-verbal communication	4
	Aware of communication styles	3
	Building consensus	3
	Sharing personal experiences	3

* *Note.* I excluded all sub-themes with only 1 or 2 participants who address the topic except for this one. I've included "Making sure everyone has a voice" as it came through strongly in the two interviews where it was addressed. It is different from the sub-theme "Allowing all voices to be present" as this it is active rather than passive.

Truth, Justice, and the American Way

This theme is essentially about justice, and is characterized by belief in fairness and equity, awareness of privilege and power, a sense of social responsibility, the drive to create change, and providing support and kindness to others. This theme stems largely from participants' answers to the question "How do you define social justice?" All of the sub-themes here were discussed directly or indirectly by every participant. This sub-theme is also characterized by highly individual views of justice and the practice of social justice; these answers will be discussed later, in the response to the first research question, "How do student affairs professionals define social justice, in the context of higher education?"

All participants felt that "social justice ... is really working toward something that is equitable" (Aggie). Also mentioned were fairness, rights, and thoughtfulness in hiring practices. Another example comes from Oneforpeace, who believes that the "... same kinds of rights [should be] afforded to everyone ... especially in student affairs, because ... that's to me one of my guiding issues." Everyone talked, to some degree, about awareness of injustices alongside of these beliefs about equity and fairness. I will speak to this awareness further in the discussion of the Mindfulness theme.

A sense of social responsibility was felt by all. Many also expressed that others, either student affairs professionals or everyone, should also have this sense of responsibility. Crystal expressed:

If you're a part of the human community, you have a social responsibility to that community. And the social responsibility you have is, 'What kind of condition do you plan on leaving this community in?'

What is gonna be your contribution to assisting humanity in moving forward and celebrating the beauty of being a human being?'

Porter explained his experience by saying:

I think the biggest thing I've learned and in my work and specifically in Student Affairs is that once I become aware of my privilege, once I became aware that there were things that I kinda took for granted, there was an obligation that I took on, and that I kinda slowed down and realized I'm missing things. And so if I just slow down and just pay attention and listen, I'm gonna get more.

Both men talked about gender privilege as well as racism, and their responsibility to address these issues proactively. Porter, in talking about learning about issues of both prevention and response to sexual assault said, "... if I don't want to always be resolving sexual assault disputes, I need to be doing some proactive work with men on campus." Part of justice, and also activism, is the belief that "... just as much as white people are responsible for dismantling racism, men are responsible for dismantling gender privilege and male dominance" (Charles). Overlapping into education, most also expressed that higher education should be helping students to learn what responsibility means in this "laboratory of citizenship" (Charles).

This sense of responsibility generated a drive to create change, which most participants discussed directly, and all wove into their descriptions. Discussed further in the Activism theme, this drive was spawned by personal involvement in transformative experiences, such as seeing first-hand poverty and classism, protests, and experiencing subtle but ongoing discrimination.

Providing support and kindness to others came up repeatedly in the search for justice. For Oneforpeace, this sub-theme especially came out. In several anecdotes, she

talks about the benefits of having supervisors who “stood up for her” in the face of discrimination and her own speaking up against those events. She also talked about the frustrations of receiving disbelieving or antagonistic responses from people who she attempted to get help from after experiencing a discriminatory event. When trying to talk to university administration, she says, “So fortunately the administrative person who answered the phone said to me after, ‘... I’m so sorry that it happened to you.’ Well hallelujah, because that’s the kind of response you should give to somebody. Which doesn’t always occur.” The person she was attempting to reach was unavailable, so she was sent to a different administrator. “... his first response was this attitude of like, ‘so what, what do you want me to do about it?’”(Oneforpeace). This event was very discouraging and frustrating for her. In another example, when speaking about supporting and educating students, Oneforpeace said, “People work hard, they need to be ... validated.” I take this to be another example of how support and validation can, in and of itself, work to create or hinder justice.

Another sub-theme was allowing all voices to be present, which was emphasized the most by Crystal. She began explaining her definition of social justice as:

... really being able to listen to people and take into account all sides of the story. To let the marginal people have a voice, and to really allow that other voice to be there, so that marginalized people feel that at least somehow their perspective and everything is being taken into consideration.

She believes that differences need to be heard in order for newness to enter the world.

Others repeatedly mentioned having conversations, creating environments where

people feel safe to speak, and keeping that conversation out there so that everyone can participate.

Activism

This theme is about protesting injustices and working proactively to minimize the existence of injustice. It is characterized by educating others, using humanizing processes, building relationships, questioning and challenging one's surroundings, speaking up, seeking change, integrating social justice into higher education, recognizing privilege and power, keeping issues at the forefront, using dialogue, and making sure everyone has a voice. Building relationships, specifically, is also characterized by supporting and affirming others and being part of a community.

Although education is its own theme, I have it included here because everyone talked about educating others in the context of activism. Education in many forms can be a powerful tool for change. For example, Charles discussed creating environments where students can have emotional as well as intellectual experiences, as he believes that understanding one's social responsibility stems from having emotive experiences, or those that reach and capture one's emotions.

Another way to educate is through humanizing processes. As Porter explained, "It's a rather, we hope, humanizing process where students are challenged to think differently about their community." Later, discussing the results of a mediation process, he said, "and they become human instead of a jackass." As students learn to think differently, they see people as whole individuals rather than simply "that

jackass” or “that bum.” Everyone discussed challenging students in this way as an important part of education and cultivating a sense of personal responsibility.

Building relationships was another sub-theme woven into everyone’s descriptions. This sub-theme also includes supporting and affirming others, and being part of a community. Building relationships was discussed as important in bringing people together to fight injustice and to support others in doing do. During one anecdote, Oneforpeace stated, “So that’s when this thing started where we mobilized students, get the community involved...” and during another, “If you really want people to come in, you get out there and be part of the community, so they know who you are. ... That’s to me the most effective work you can do.” Other descriptions included building relationships with colleagues to support one another, and supporting and affirming students in fighting injustice.

I asked participants to discuss how they have integrated social justice into their student affairs work. I included this under Activism as the answers were all active things that they did to practice social justice. They all addressed this more or less strongly, most stating clearly that social justice is not only a part of their job but should be a part of higher education as a whole. “I think we almost need to have that approach of incorporating [social justice] into everything we’re doing; otherwise, we don’t make headway” (Porter). Regardless of functional area, most participants directly stated “social justice is my job” (Porter)” or something similar. Other answers included hiring people who will be open to learning about social justice, creating safe spaces, bringing a vocal presence about social justice issues, doing cultural audits of

the environment, creating bridges between units, healing distances between communities, making sure all students and student groups feel supported, being proactive rather than reactive, even when “reacting” to something, using humanizing processes, and teaching students how to resist injustices.

Three sub-themes, questioning and challenging, speaking up, and seeking change all occurred in slightly different contexts for everyone, but all speak to the same idea of actively seeking to change unjust practices. As Charles described his process of coming to be oriented toward social justice, he stated, “I learned a lot about how if you wait around the system may never change for your favor. But you can definitely advocate for and demand and point out where change needs to occur.” This was echoed directly by all but one participant, who alluded to it more indirectly. Oneforpeace made a statement toward this end while describing a speaker who she found inspiring: “He said that ... ‘One must build the capacity for resistance, that you have to resist injustice because that is how we will build peace’” (Oneforpeace).

Recognizing privilege and power came up as another sub-theme, which three participants mentioned. This came up around activism, as to fight injustice you must first be able to see it. The mentions of recognizing privilege and power were interlaced in stories, descriptions of educating others, and in participants’ growth processes. Keeping issues at the forefront was another sub-theme that three people discussed. This one came up in the context of speaking up, challenging injustices, and having conversations.

Using dialogue and making sure everyone has a voice are the final sub-themes. These were emphasized the most by Crystal, but also talked about or indirectly alluded to by most participants. Using dialogue came up as important for learning, creating change, and teaching others. “The only way you can really effect any change is by allowing dialogue, and dialogue has to include the voice of the other” (Crystal). “Making sure everyone has a voice” was only mentioned by two people. I have included it because it was a theme emphasized strongly by both Crystal and Charles, was alluded to by others, and because I personally believe it to be a very important point. This is different from the more passive sub-theme “allow all voices to be present” included in Justice, as it is talked about actively, in purposely being mindful that everyone is included. This sub-theme was mentioned in the context of leadership styles and emphasizes listening to others as a crucial part of inclusiveness.

Personal Experience and Commitment

Personal Experience and Commitment is about each participant’s personal path and commitment to social justice. It is characterized by transformative experiences, a sense of social responsibility, persistence, community, courage, and introspectiveness.

Each participant discussed multiple examples of their personal experience with privilege, oppression, and inequity. The personal piece seemed, for everyone, to center around emotive, powerful, or otherwise transformative experiences. These experiences began during early or middle childhood through first year of college for participants, and everyone discussed events of this nature that still occur for them. Crystal talked

about, “hearing about the Holocaust, at a very young age I might add, and being appalled that anything like that could happen.” Oneforpeace explained that, growing up, “... there was always this ‘how come,’ ‘this is not right,’ ‘this is not fair.’” Later, she spent time in the South. “... To see the daily injustices there and the ways that people were treated...” was, in itself, a powerful experience for her. Charles was introduced to a wide variety of people as a first year student in college, and felt valued to be a part of that diverse community. In the interview, Charles also talked about his belief that oppression is not about being smart enough, but about “a key shift in the way you feel.” “It’s not an intellectual problem,” he says, “It is an emotional problem.” Therefore, he feels strongly that we need to create places where students can learn not just intellectually about these problems, but explore emotionally what these things mean.

From these transformative experiences, each participant stated that they hold social justice as a foundational principle, something inseparable from themselves and their lives, and something they will work to integrate into their careers and teach to others. “[Social justice] is a piece of the fabric of who I am” (Aggie). “So, when I went into graduate school and on to working in higher ed, this wasn’t a surprise to me that [social justice] would be a foundational principle” (Charles).

Also stemming from these experiences was evidence of persistence and dedication. The sub-theme “Keeping up your work” came from the words of one participant’s supervisor when she was facing discrimination and harassment at work.

All participants showed this persistence in the face of challenges, frustrations, and the continual need to keep fighting injustice.

Part of this persistence is shown in the sub-theme “It’s a journey.” In Aggie’s words, learning how to practice social justice is, “a journey and a process,” which four participants echoed in similar words. These participants spoke directly about the need to seek out additional learning experiences. They talked about doing a lot of reading on a wide variety of topics, attending professional conferences that were about or addressed issues of diversity, attending and facilitating workshops. They have been trained in various facilitation, mediation, and coaching methods. They have learned to engage colleagues in conversations, even in moments of crisis, and created relationships with others where they could ask those “dumb” questions in a safe space.

Another sub-theme, “Skills developed along the way” was a statement made by four of the participants, and I believe would be agreed to by all. As part of their learning and other experiences, the participants all agreed that there is no cure-all, no panacea, no social justice “shot” or vaccination that will make someone know everything there is to know about practicing social justice or being a multiculturally competent person. As evidenced, all participants have been through a wide variety of learning experiences to get where they are today.

Self-awareness, a sub-theme echoed by all, came up for everyone in these contexts of learning and growing, and I had the impression from everyone that self-awareness was very important for their self-confidence and effectiveness as social

justice practitioners. This sub-theme will be discussed further in the “Mindfulness” theme.

Challenging yourself and others was addressed by almost everyone.

“Challenging yourself” came up as participants spoke about seeking out learning and speaking up against injustices. “Challenging others” consistently came up when talking about educating others, encouraging them to speak up and find their own ways of seeking social justice.

All but one participant talked very directly about their own personal social responsibility and the social responsibility that they believe others have, or should have. The concept of responsibility came up in many contexts, including seeking knowledge, speaking up, educating others, and generally continuing the search for social justice. Crystal summarizes this overall sentiment as, “If you’re part of the human community, you have a social responsibility to that community.” Charles addresses educating others when he says, “I’ve got to talk about white privilege and I’ve got to talk about this socialization experience of mine.” Oneforpeace, forever an activist, says, “I’ve always said, ‘if I don’t stop speaking up then you better shoot me.’ Because, you know, I’ve gotta sleep with myself every night.” This sense of responsibility came through strongly and was apparent that it gave them motivation to continue this work.

Three participants mentioned finding affirmation as part of their process.

“Finding the everyday people who are inspirational is very critical to maintaining and feeding your spirit” (Crystal). This was also addressed in the context of feedback from

students, and some participants said that they have kept in contact with students who appreciated the work they did together.

I kept the following quote for the end of this section, as it sums up, to a large extent, the sentiment of this theme:

“... the bottom line for me is that ... the hurt people experience, whether faculty, staff, or students on this campus ... [who are] doing well in the world, are impacted when they go through stuff like this. And it tears my heart out, you know, and I guess [it] spurs me on to do more. You know, it's just not okay. We need to speak up” (Oneforpeace).

Mindfulness

The theme of mindfulness reflects the importance of awareness about self and society. This includes awareness of the impact of one's actions upon others, noticing and including others, noticing and questioning one's surroundings, awareness of the underlying circumstances involved in events, and awareness of privilege and power and how these impact people. This theme is woven throughout the others, but also emerged as an important concept in and of itself. It is essentially very simple, but also very important as a basis for the other themes.

Self-awareness is a sub-theme that is also an important part of the Personal Experience theme. It is characterized by a dedicating to introspection. “Social justice requires that you be an introspective person. In other words, you have to critique situations and then you must be able to critique yourself, and that requires a great deal of courage” (Crystal). All participants stated that self-awareness was an important

quality in their growth, continued learning, and competence in practicing social justice.

Noticing and questioning surroundings was another sub-theme that everyone mentioned. This came up in the contexts of learning about oppression and injustice, teaching others, and activism. Porter was describing his learning process when he said, “Then, as you deal with it, you kinda become more aware that there’s other issues at play.” Charles was discussing doing cultural audits of the office and stated, “You get aware very quickly that we have a lot of ways in which we can influence the sense of who belongs here.” Another example comes from Oneforpeace as she talked about her life’s journey. “So by the time I was little I was recognizing that things were not right and I was willing to speak up about them.” This kind of awareness is important to being able to see injustices and create change.

Inclusiveness is another form of awareness, because you have to pay attention to others’ involvement to know who to include and when. All participants discussed the importance of being inclusive. Charles was talking about his practice of appreciative leadership when he said, “And so there’s no place at which there’s an ‘us’ and a ‘them’ or *the* committee or *the* group.” Inclusiveness also came up in the contexts of discriminatory incidents based on lack of inclusion, desiring inclusion when making decisions, and making sure everyone who needs to be is involved in a conversation.

Being aware of behavior as well as words is a sub-theme that speaks to awareness of how your actions impact others. Four participants discussed this in

various ways. It came up as participants talked about unconscious discrimination, environmental factors that exclude people, and the ability of people to follow through in action what they say with words. "... you have to see the differences ... to understand where people come from. But if you don't, then unconsciously ... you will treat people in a way that discriminates" (Oneforpeace).

Being aware of privilege and underlying circumstances is a sub-theme that for participants mentioned both directly and indirectly. It speaks to participants' learning to see privilege and their abilities to serve students by getting at what's really going on. Oneforpeace spoke about:

... the stories that the students brought to me, the faculty brought to me, the staff brought to me, of things not being right and fair. Where there's a hostile kind of working or learning environment. Where truly in fact people are being treated differently ... all the values and missions of the ... university may not ... be followed.

This is an example of Oneforpeace recognizing what truly goes on for students, faculty, and staff who speak to her. This type of awareness is also important to be able to see oppression and thus speak up against it.

Education

The final two themes, Education and Communication, are broad, all-encompassing beliefs, attributes, and skills. Education is about empowerment and the path of educating oneself and others in a variety of settings. It includes educating students, pursuing knowledge, learning from others, thinking critically, reflecting on learning, and belief in education as an instrument of social justice.

“... more than anything else, we’re educators” (Porter). This statement summed up what all participants felt about working in higher education as student affairs professionals. All participants talked about educational needs of students and others and environments in which education about social justice needs to occur. “... no amount of intellectual information is enough to change somebody. So we have to create these sort of places where both emotional shift and intellectual shift can occur” (Charles). For Charles, that means small group work. For others, the settings occurred in the areas that they worked in and in which they had the most access to students, such as student groups and student workers. Modeling was another method of education that mentioned by all, in terms of the participants modeling behavior to others and encouraging those others to model behavior as well. Charles also expressed that higher education provides the ideal setting for social justice work to occur, because “... we get an opportunity to make it more real. To really help the student to reflect on what’s occurring and why it’s occurring. And challenge them a bit more around the positions they may have” (Charles). All participants made clear statements about educating others, especially students, both about social justice and about how to practice it. “... we have a responsibility to encourage our students and not discourage them when there’s issues of this to move forward, and to fight for issues of justice” (Oneforpeace).

Another issue on which all participants agreed was that there was no quick fix, no easy way to learn about social justice and how to practice it. “I honestly can’t say that there’s a camp I went to, a book that I read, or a guru that I paid” (Crystal). They

all said this in the context of talking about their own life paths and gaining the knowledge and skills they needed. Along with this, all but one participant spoke directly about the need to actively pursue knowledge. “Although I was highly exposed to the African American community, I really didn’t learn much about any other cultures and so I had to go pursue that knowledge” (Charles). They talked about reading, attending conferences, attending and facilitating workshops, and being trained in formal mediation, facilitation, and coaching practices, and supporting groups by attending cultural and educational events. Each of these participants recognized that they did not and could not learn all they needed to know through life experience alone, nor through academic learning alone, but that gaining knowledge and skills was a process of both. They also recognized that this was a never-ending process.

...as much as we may think we ... have social competencies, we’re not ever going to get to a place where we’re totally socially competent and culturally competent in all areas, so we have to be actively seeking those out (Porter).

Part of pursuing knowledge, for most participants, was learning from others outside of the classroom. Here, participants talked about seeking out colleagues and making friendships from whom they could ask questions, have deep conversations, gain support, and, generally, keep learning. This was also an aspect of educating others, as participants all recognized the need for students to have life experiences around these issues.

Thinking critically came up for four participants, either directly or evidenced through their stories.

Society does not teach us to be introspective, to take the time to question ourselves or to question events around us. We really are not taught to critique social events, to critique difference, to critique why a group of people may feel a particular way..." (Crystal).

They emphasized the need to do this for their own sake's and for those whom they were educating. Getting students to think critically about events that happened to them, that they created, or that were happening around them all came up. Overall, thinking critically was seen as a crucial part of gaining knowledge and skills for practicing social justice.

Reflecting on learning was a sub-theme mentioned by three participants. These participants felt that to pause and notice, listen, and reflect was an important part of their learning processes and those of students.

The belief in education as a method of facilitating social justice was brought up by three participants. Charles articulated this very well. "... Pretty much all of those ... system building professions require an advanced degree," he said, when talking about the meaning of social justice within higher education, referring to professions such as being an educator or a lawyer.

There is no social justice in higher education when the system builders of the world all look like me. White and male. Or are people of the dominant culture. And so of course social justice has to be a part of the system that builds the system builders" (Charles).

To summarize this section, I will end with another quote from Charles: "Education is freedom."

Communication

As noted, Communication is a broad theme, and is about communicating with others to build and heal communities and the ability to dialogue with others in the search for social justice. Overall, this theme is about having the skills to practice social justice. It includes listening, creating welcoming environments, speaking up, having conversations, awareness of nonverbal communication and communication styles, building consensus, and sharing personal experiences.

“But then my favorite thing to hear is, ‘Oh, they felt heard.’ ‘Cause that’s my goal” (Porter). Listening, meaning truly hearing what people have to say, was a point that come up repeatedly in every interview. Everyone stressed this as an important skill which they have learned, and, in turn, has helped them to learn. “I’ve learned in the last decade to listen differently than I had before” (Porter). Porter also said that the desire of to be heard, whether or not one is understood, was a universal desire, citing his children as examples.

Creating welcoming environments is another important skill which I’ve included under communication because an environment communicates a message about who is welcome and who is not, about what types of people are welcome or not, and about the way that the environment is meant to be used. All participants agreed that paying attention to the environment was important for making everyone feel welcome and valued and for facilitating communication. “You wanna create the most positive and really welcoming environment for anybody when you value and appreciate [them]” (Oneforpeace).

Speaking up and making a point is a sub-theme I included here, even though it is largely addressed under Activism, because it dealt directly with communicating a message to others. Speaking up and making a point was talked about by every participant. It was addressed in the contexts of learning how to speak up and clearly articulate a point in a way that the dominant culture demands, learning to have confidence and speak out more often, and teaching students how to break out of their shell or go against their cultural expectations.

Having conversations came up clearly and in definite ways in every interview. In terms on their own learning, participants considered conversations to be an important way that they learned and grew. In educating others, participants felt that creating spaces where students could have conversations with others and each other was an important part of experiential learning. Also, supporting students or new colleagues in speaking up was a topic some focused on, such as Aggie, when she expressed her belief and continual work toward, “creating an environment where we can have a conversation,” and “keeping that conversation out there,” so that all feel welcome and supported. Conversations also played a role in advocacy, as dialogue between parties was talked about as an important part of understanding one another and ending injustice.

Having conversations is a crucial part of building consensus, a sub-theme that three participants talked about. In reflecting on her leadership style, Oneforpeace told me about how important it was for her to build consensus among everyone in her unit. “...I feel really good that we’ve had some hard and difficult and deep discussions.

And yet we process through it, and I think we are at another level. ... my major thing is that it will be on a regular basis, we will address issues” (Oneforpeace).

Awareness of non-verbal communication and of communication styles were mentioned by four and three participants, respectively. These sub-themes are about awareness of the impact of one’s non-verbal communication on others and of what someone else’s non-verbal communication may mean, and awareness of one’s own and others’ communication styles. Several participants mentioned that misunderstandings can occur out of fear or ignorance due to these factors, thus, it is important to have knowledge of these when talking to people of other cultures and backgrounds from oneself.

Sharing personal experiences was felt to be a responsibility by three of the participants. They had all experienced that by sharing their experiences, they could help other people come to terms with similar issues. This sharing helped the participants to grow personally and to develop important parts of their identities. Two participants felt that as a member of the dominant culture, it was their responsibility to share their experiences with other people in that group, for example, white men. For these participants, sharing their experiences was an activist act. For another person, sharing their stories was a way to support people who were going through similar struggles. Overall, sharing personal experiences, while not mentioned many times, was seen by participants as a tool for self-growth, and for, supporting, challenging, and encouraging others.

The Research Questions

Here I will be addressing the original research questions and how the data answered them. I asked interview questions which largely aligned with the research questions. I analyzed this data both for common themes and for answers to the research questions. Both types of analysis provided answers to the research questions.

The interview questions were

1. How do you define social justice? How do you define social justice in the context of higher education, your institution, or your work as a student affairs professional, if differently?
2. Why did you come to be oriented toward practicing social justice in your career?
3. How did you acquire the knowledge and skills you use in practicing social justice in your career?
4. How have you integrated social justice practice into your current position?
5. Has your social justice framework influenced your leadership or managerial style? Has it influenced the way you structure your unit or department? If so, how?
6. What do you think the field of student affairs needs to continue improving its approach toward social justice?

In the sections below, I will address how the data answered each research question. Due to the nature of the questions, they will all be addressed differently. When asked to define social justice, participants had elements in common, but also had a wide variance among them. In this section I will address this variance, which also allows more of each participant's unique viewpoint to emerge. Participants also

answered the second question very differently, with common elements there as well. Again, I will address both, but here will focus on the common elements. In addressing attributes and skills, I found that the data here aligned into a table. I will explain how I developed the table. The specific points of the table have already been addressed in the presentation of the themes.

Defining Social Justice

How do student affairs professionals define social justice, in the context of higher education? As stated at the beginning of this chapter, each participant had their own takes on this topic, in addition to what was discussed in the theme Truth, Justice, and the American Way. These common topics included believing in fairness, equity, and the same kinds of rights for all, allowing all voices to be present, providing support and kindness to others, awareness of injustices, creating change, and a sense of social responsibility. Below are some of the unique topics about which participants spoke in relationship to defining and practicing social justice.

Oneforpeace spoke strongly that higher education should have a commitment to social justice at all levels. They should do this by requiring all new hires to agree to be on a plan, where they would have concrete steps to complete over a period of time, such as attending cultural events, educational lectures, workshops, and other events to increase their multicultural competence. She clearly stated that it is unethical for someone to work with a specific group of people when that person has a low level of

multicultural competence in that area, as this person could do more harm than good to the people of that population.

Charles stated that “education is freedom,” and that it is the “great step forward that everyone is looking for.” He felt that, “there is no social justice in higher education when the system builders of the world all look like me. White and male, or are people of the dominant culture.” As I also discuss in the Education section, Charles believed that education opens up “doorways or pathways” to the “professions that create the systems in which we live.” For Charles, this appeared to be a key part of bringing about social justice.

Crystal emphasized the importance of difference and of all voices being heard. She said that, “most higher education institutions run on the philosophy of ... utilitarianism, the greatest good for the greatest number.” However, this philosophy marginalizes the voices of the people who are not part of the greatest number. She spoke about hybridity of ideas, saying hybridity is the way that newness enters the world. “Hybridity means that you’re allowing different things to create a new thing ... so that means allowing differences to be heard allowing differences to be a part of the conversation.” To Crystal, listening to all voices was the critical point in her discussion of social justice in higher education.

Aggie was more straightforward, and spoke about social justice as eliminating oppression. She felt it is important to keep issues at the forefront. Doing this included speaking up, not necessarily in a large way, but in a way that can be understood by those to whom you are speaking.

Porter, as a white man, addressed practicing social justice by talking about giving up power. He said that one way he did this was to literally try to sit lower than the students to whom he was talking, especially women. Like Oneforpeace, he also spoke strongly about the need for a commitment to social justice. He spoke about supporting groups by attending events and strongly encouraging other professionals to attend. He also spoke about balance for both students and other professionals, between training people about social justice issues versus mandating the training because, as he said, “we know it’s not as effective.”

Coming to be Oriented to Social Justice

How do student affairs professionals come to be oriented toward social justice practice? Participants all had very different stories of their lives as they told me about how they came to be orientated toward social justice in their careers. None of them spoke only about their career throughout the interview, but spoke of their lives as a whole. It was clear from their stories that none of them could do social justice work only in their careers, but that it was infused into how they chose to live their lives, it influenced what career paths they chose, and was something that could not be set aside easily or at all.

Three participants began their story as a child, describing events that caused them to notice and question their surroundings. Another participant began their story as an undergraduate, being introduced to their sisters’ diverse group of friends. The final participant did not begin by talking about their life, but about how they, in their

education and career, learned that there were things going on that they hadn't noticed before. This participant later talked about their family, expressing, like the others had earlier, that practicing social justice was not something left at work.

The theme of Personal Experience and Commitment largely answers this question. All of the participants experienced transformative experiences as they learned about discrimination and systemic oppression. They all expressed that social justice is a foundational principle, the right thing to do. Other sub-themes that apply here include a sense of social responsibility, persistence, self-awareness, challenging oneself and others, and finding affirmation. Of the other themes, a variety of sub-themes also apply as elements of the participants' journey to be oriented to social justice. These are: noticing and questioning, seeking education, reflecting on learning, educating others, building relationships, integrating social justice into their jobs and higher education, speaking up, thinking critically, awareness of behavior as well as words, and sharing personal experiences. For example, building relationships was important for some participants in order to ask questions and have conversations that helped them to learn and grow. Noticing and questioning was a theme of one participant's journey from childhood onward, as this person continually noticed unfair practices and challenged them.

To summarize, each participant had a very different path to practicing social justice in higher education, but common themes can be identified that may help others understand their own paths.

Attributes and Skills

What are the attributes of student affairs professionals who have integrated social justice practice into their professional practice? What essential skills are necessary to practice social justice in student affairs? An *attribute* is an internal process, while a *skill* is a reflection of that process as actions in the world. I have combined the presentation of results for these two questions because the results lend themselves to being arranged together, as shown on Table 2.

Table 2

Attributes and Skills Mentioned by Participants

Attributes	Skills
Overarching Beliefs About Social Justice Holds a feeling of personal responsibility for others Believes that others should have a similar personal responsibility Believes in fairness, equity, and similar rights for all Holds social justice as a foundational principle Believes that education is a method of facilitating social justice Believes that no “social justice shot” exists; it’s a process	<i>Skills for these overarching beliefs are categorized below</i>

Attributes	Skills
<p>Belief that Disparity Exists</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is aware of privilege and underlying circumstances Is aware of behavior and impact of this on others Is aware of non-verbal communication and communication styles 	<p>Skills that Facilitate Awareness of Disparity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Notices and critically examines self and surroundings Questions and challenges self and surroundings Learns about communication styles and practices awareness of them
<p>Belief in Pursuing Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Desires to learn more 	<p>Skills to Pursue Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pursues education, formal and informal Has conversations, asks questions Thinks critically Reflects on learning
<p>Belief in Celebrating Humanity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appreciates others Desires to hear all voices Values kindness Believes that all voices should be allowed to be present 	<p>Skills to Celebrate Humanity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Includes everyone Creates a welcoming environment Makes sure all voices are present Actively listens Builds relationships, provides support, works to heal relationships Builds consensus Finds affirmation when needed

Attributes	Skills
Beliefs about Creating Change	Skills to Create Change
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has a drive to change unjust practices Desires to educate others Believes in persisting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seeks change of unjust practices Speaks up, is able to make a point Uses dialogue Uses humanizing processes Shares personal experiences at appropriate times Models behavior Integrates social justice into career and higher education Challenges self and others Keeps issues at the forefront Shows persistence and dedication

The table begins with “Overarching Beliefs about Social Justice,” which does not include a corresponding skills column. This set of beliefs is overarching, meaning that they frame the rest of the categories. Therefore, all the skills are placed in the remaining categories.

The remaining four category pairs address attributes and skills about disparity, pursuing knowledge, celebrating humanity, and creating change. They are more concrete and more specific than the first one. This allowed me to break the attributes and skills up cleanly, avoiding overlap as much as possible between the categories for the purposes of presenting the results.

The attributes, to me, are largely beliefs and values of the participants, such as fairness and honesty. These are part of who a person is, but are not necessarily fixed.

As with any habit or skill, attributes can be intentionally chosen and learned, however, these reflect the internally held beliefs and characteristics. The skills are the external reflection of those values. Not all of us have the skills to enact our values, but, as the participants all agreed, their skills developed along the way as they attempted, and keep attempting, to enact their values.

Summary of Results

In this chapter I have presented the results of my research. I began by discussing the six themes that emerged from the data overall, addressing specific sub-themes while speaking to the whole. I then turned to the research questions and how the data answered the questions. Here I was able to present more of the individual perspectives that arose during the interviews. I was also able to put common attributes and skills into a table, divided into five categories which transpose similar attributes with the skills that correspond to that group of attributes.

Conclusions and Implications

This final chapter restates the research statement and research questions, reviews the major methods, and summarizes the results. The rest of this chapter will be devoted to a discussion of the results, along with implications for practice and for further research.

Restatement of Research Questions and Methods

As stated in Chapter 1, I believe that student affairs professionals should become social justice advocates in the context of their duty to support students to the greatest extent possible. To this end, this thesis examines the role of social justice in student affairs by studying student affairs professionals who are identified by their peers to be effective at incorporating social justice practice into their work.

The research questions of this study are: How do student affairs professionals define social justice, in the context of higher education? How do student affairs professionals come to be oriented toward social justice practice? What are the attributes of student affairs professionals who have integrated social justice practice into their professional practice? What essential skills are necessary to practice social justice in student affairs?

To research these questions, I recruited five participants from a public, land-grant university in the Pacific Northwest. I asked the participants to choose their own pseudonyms. They are: Aggie, a white, lesbian woman; Charles, a white man; Crystal, a Native American woman; Oneforpeace, an Asian American woman; and Porter, a

white man. All but two came from different functional areas within student affairs, and all but one had some degree of managerial duties.

I conducted interviews with all five participants, and asked all to write a narrative about an event. I did not use the written data because I did not receive all of them, and because the interviews themselves provided a wealth of information.

The interview questions were closely aligned with the research questions, thus, the interviews contained types of data I was hoping to attain. The answers were very individual, and although this uniqueness is not well reflected by my method of data analysis, I believe that this individuality contributed to the richness of the themes and categories elicited from all participants' interviews.

To analyze the data, I used a coding scheme based on those outlined by Creswell (2005, p. 237-239). There were five steps to my coding process, through which I culled the data for answers to the research questions. These answers were compared to create six broad themes, each with multiple sub-themes (See Table 1 in Chapter 4). Finally, I compared the answers again to pull out attributes and skills that the participants mentioned in the interviews. I was able to create five categories of corresponding attributes and skills (see Table 2 in Chapter 4). During each stage I cross-checked the emerging themes and categories with the previous coding and the raw data. This ensured that my analysis stayed as true to the original data as possible.

Summary of Results

Each participant's interview data reflected their personal history with social justice and their unique views on social justice, how it should operate, and what personal traits and efforts one must possess to practice social justice effectively. Out of these five interviews, I was able to create six overarching themes and five categories of attributes and skills.

The themes are: Truth, Justice, and the American way; Activism; Personal Experience and Commitment; Mindfulness; Education; and Communication. They loosely pair together, as Justice and Activism, Personal Experience and Mindfulness, and Education and Communication. Each theme has multiple sub-themes (see Table 2 in Chapter 4) which illustrate the complexity of each theme. The titles of the themes and sub-themes used the participants' words as often as possible, while still attempting to be as succinct as possible. As I speak about each theme, I touch on each sub-theme, using quotes as illustrations.

I then turned to the research questions, which are restated in the previous section. Answers to the definition of social justice all contained similar statements, which are largely reflected in the theme of "Truth, Justice, and the American Way." However, this was a place where each of the participants also had unique contributions to the conversation, and I speak about each of these with quotes from each individual. The participants' stories about coming to be oriented to social justice were also very unique, but contained similar types of experiences. This is largely reflected in the theme of "Personal Experience and Commitment."

The five categories of attributes and skills originated as I sought answers to the third and fourth research questions, which asked about attributes and skills, respectively. I categorized the answers in a table, aligning skills with applicable categories of attributes. The table begins with “Overarching Beliefs about Social Justice,” which does not include a corresponding skills column. This set of beliefs is overarching, meaning that they frame the rest of the categories. The remaining four category pairs address attributes and skills about disparity, pursuing knowledge, celebrating humanity, and creating change. Again, with the categories as I did with the themes, I used the participants’ words as much as possible rather than my interpretations of them.

Discussion and Implications

In this section I will provide a discussion of the results. Throughout this discussion I will suggest implications for practice and further research. I do not presume to present any *general* implications for practice, but I do suggest tentative implications for how this research might be able to apply for specific people, in specific contexts and, after further research, more broadly.

Greater Effectiveness

The results showed, for these participants, that being a social justice advocate enhanced their work as student affairs professionals, and the students’ experience at their institutions. It increased their ability to communicate with others for a variety of

ends, such as relationship building, advocacy, and educating others. All participants spoke about students or staff that they had worked with, who had been dissatisfied, hurt, or lacked understanding of issues. Participants were able to include people in the conversation to alleviate their dissatisfaction, assist and advocate for students who had been in some way hurt, and educate students who lacked understanding through a variety of means.

A possible implication for practice could be to reaffirm for student affairs professionals who are learning how to practice social justice that the skills that they are developing will assist them in many ways during their careers. In seeking to communicate well, bring people together, maintain integrity with one's values, and challenge and educate students, professionals will be meeting the core values expressed in student affairs' professional ethical codes (Komives, Woodard & Assoc., 2003; Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education; 2006).

Implications for research relating to these topics could include investigating the results of a professionals' social justice behavior on colleagues and students, which could potentially investigate individual methods such as modeling, being intentionally inclusive, and raising awareness.

Personal Commitment

All participants showed a personal commitment to social justice. For them, social justice practice is challenging and requires courage, but also comes with social and personal rewards. They all emphasized powerful and transformative experiences

that they experienced and that they have watched students experience. Having and assisting others through these experiences seems to hold their own rewards for the participants. Also, their social justice mentality was not left at work, but was with them in other aspects of their lives. For example, Porter talked about raising awareness in his kids of oppressive structures, and Oneforpeace mentioned advocating for her son at school when he faced punishment based on his skin color and larger than average build. Participants all spoke about their personal journey which began in their youth and still continues through reading, conversations, asking questions, questioning circumstances around them, and being willing to speak up when necessary. Additionally, three participants spoke about seeking out support, such as other colleagues who also believe in and practice social justice as a way to maintain energy for and commitment to this work.

An implication for practice may be to encourage those who are attempting to practice social justice but finding it frustrating. This is “more of a journey and a process than a class that you take or anything” (Aggie). Persisting and challenging yourself are some of the characteristics of these participants. Aggie also mentioned that allowing yourself to make mistakes and to learn from them has been an important part of this process for her.

Another potential implication for practice could be the influence this and similar research may have on graduate preparation programs for student affairs professionals. Seeing that learning how to perform social justice work effectively is a journey, graduate schools should consider a variety of ways to integrate learning and

practice on this issue into their curriculum. It was clear to every participant that a single workshop or class is not an adequate means through which to expect new professionals to understand how to effectively cope with these complex problems. All participants mention many ways that they have learned about themselves, others, and societal structures, through both formal education and hands-on experience.

Potential implications for research include studying the level of commitment to social justice of student affairs professionals, related to the number and intensity of transformative experiences, overall job satisfaction, and impact on students.

Awareness

Mindfulness, or awareness, was an important theme for participants. Being aware of themselves and others, they were able to facilitate positive interactions between diverse groups of people. This also assisted them to create more affirmative, productive, and inclusive working and learning environments. Awareness of their surroundings enabled participants to notice oppression, educate themselves, and work toward minimizing their own oppressive behaviors. This also helped them to educate others by being able to point out oppressive events when they happen.

An implication for practice may be to draw attention to the role that awareness might play in developing as a social justice advocate and in educating others toward this end.

Implications for research could be a quantitative study of the impacts of awareness on a person's level of cognitive development, identity development, level of commitment to social justice, and ability to effectively practice social justice.

Congruence between Values and the Institution

My research shows that, for the participants in this study, being a social justice advocate is congruent with working in higher education and with being a student affairs professional. Participants often felt like being a student affairs professional was a natural part of their job, in whatever functional area of student affairs that they worked.

One finding that relates to this was participants' discussions of the institutional mission and their perception of whether or not their social justice practice was in alignment with that mission. I was not able to mention this in the results because it was mainly discussed in the written portion of the data, and only two participants talked about this during the interview. However, every time participants mentioned this subject, they said that they definitely felt like their behavior was in alignment with their university's mission, that (regardless of functional area), "I don't feel like I'm doing something outside of my job. It is my job" (Porter). Crystal also talked about how diversity was not a part of the mission of institutions where she had worked in the past. She said,

I ended up doing a lot of that sort of thing of the side, on my own time.
But it was soul fulfilling for me, and it was for the students as well,

because I still keep in touch with those students even to this day, and they really truly appreciated what I was doing for them.

I found it interesting to think about how this work can be a mainstream part of what student affairs professionals do for a living. Social justice work does not have to be something done under cover or after hours, but can be integrated into any functional area of student affairs.

A possible implication for practice might be that those professionals who hold a social justice perspective should examine the institution's mission and values, and how those are actually expressed, before accepting a position there. It may be that intentionally selecting an institution that values social justice practice could lead to greater job satisfaction. Also, once a person is confident in their ability to practice social justice effectively, they may intentionally choose an institution that exhibits little social justice consciousness. There they could support students that may otherwise be unsupported and do the important work of educating individuals who are members of dominant paradigm groups about oppression. Regardless, it appears that incorporating social justice practice is possible from any student affairs position.

One implication this may have for further research would be to study individuals' experiences practicing social justice in institutions where they did or did not feel that their actions were aligned with the mission. Some possible variables could include the participant's overall health and level of job satisfaction. Another way this could be expressed is through a comparison of students' needs being met, overall satisfaction, and numbers of students who become social justice allies.

Working Definitions of Social Justice

I believe it would be fair to say that, for at least three of them, the participants did not think much about the questions ahead of time. Thus, what they expressed to me was more of a working definition of social justice. This is an important point because all of the participants spoke about more than just fairness and equality in their definitions of social justice. Rather, social justice seems to be more about having a feeling of social responsibility, and about each individual's path of acting on that sense of responsibility. To illustrate, the participants all seem to possess a desire to listen deeper for what is not said, for people whose voices are not being heard. Then, they are striving to identify the places in the structure of our society that are marginalizing these voices.

An implication for practice may be that taking some time to think about a personal definition could be helpful for professionals who are practicing social justice in their career. Most participants voiced to me during or after the interview that answering these questions had been a good reflective exercise for them for various reasons. It also may be that knowing oneself and one's motivations can serve as a guiding lamp in times of uncertainty and crisis.

One implication for further research might be to examine the role one's personal definition of social justice plays in their outward behavior toward that goal.

Multicultural Competence

I did not focus on multicultural competence much in this thesis so that I could focus closely on social justice. I will speak briefly here about how multicultural competence intersects with this study.

Of the participants, Oneforpeace and Aggie directly spoke about having multicultural competence (“intercultural competence” and “cultural competence”). Crystal, Porter, and Charles did not directly talk about it, but did mention aspects that are also considered to be of multicultural competence, such as recognizing the cultural components of specific situations, speaking with different kinds of people, and having knowledge of others’ cultures to diminish fear and facilitate communication. To me, this implies a strong connection between multicultural competence and social justice, however, the nature of that tie is still unclear. Some participants spoke about multicultural competence or multiculturally related skills in the tone of using them as a tool of social justice, and others almost used the concepts interchangeably.

An implication for further research could be to examine the similarities and differences between multicultural competence and social justice, and the role of both in student affairs.

Other Implications for Research

Along with the other implications for research mentioned above, I have several other suggestions. One would be to repeat this study with a larger sample, a different research paradigm, or otherwise altered methods. Another beneficial addition to the

literature would be a quantitative study of student affairs professionals on this topic. Finally, looking at this research in the context of other literature, such as that of multicultural competence, could find some interesting intersections or implications for practice.

Personal Implications

I chose to do this research not only to contribute the literature, but also for my own growth and understanding of what it means to practice social justice as a student affairs professional. As a result of the process of exploring research questions, doing a lot of reading, and interviewing five amazing participants, I better understand the complexity of social justice and what it truly means to seek social justice. I understand the value of continuing my education through a variety of means, and encouraging others to do so as well. I see a great value in having good communication skills to help facilitate functional relationships between people. While I see the significance of developing skill sets that I feel need more work, I also understand that I will work the most effectively, be truest to myself, and be less likely to burn out if I recognize my strengths and how to use them to achieve my goals. I learned a lot about social justice practice in general, and in higher education specifically. Last, but certainly not least, I wrote a thesis! This was, for me, a huge accomplishment that gave me greater confidence in and knowledge about myself.

Conclusion

I conclude this thesis with a story that Charles told at the end of our interview:

... And so there is a place where our privilege has sheltered us and protected us. And you've created this panacea that the solutions are easier. That the ways out are just effort or whatever. And when you really do let it sink in that racism kills people. Racism ruins lives.

And I did an exercise [date] that asked people at the very beginning when they entered the room to write down the answers to these questions. What race are you? was the first question. Or races. Write that down. Did you think about your race today before you came into the workshop? Write the answer down. What caused you to think about your race today? Write the answer down.

Then we go into discussion about who answered what way. Ninety percent of them ... said that they had not thought about their race today. Three people in the room had. Two were faculty members who were white, who were teaching courses in multiculturalism. The third was an African American woman.

And so I'm debriefing with the three of them why they answered differently than the 90 percent in the room. The two white faculty members said, 'I have to give it that perspective every day because I have to think about what I'm teaching and the influence that my race has on my perspectives.' Very well. Understood.

And I said, 'And for you?' to the woman who is African American sitting in the room. She said, 'Are you kidding? For a person of color you don't go an hour without thinking about your race.'

Not an hour. You know for them to walk in a white world built on white privilege, to constantly have all these expectations heaped on them. You know the burden of racism on people of color is so huge that when white people finally get it and when they finally are able to see what that burden means to someone, and that there's hardly ever a rest. Unless you are asleep or you are so deeply embedded in your total culture that white people and white world ways are so outside of you for a few moments, for a few hours, for a few days. We can't even imagine the weight of racism. But once you have seen what the cost is you can't wait to undo it.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

IRB Consent Document



Adult Education & Higher Education Leadership
 Oregon State University, College of Education, 403 Education Hall, Corvallis, OR 97331-3502
 Phone 541-737-4317 Fax 541-737-3655 www.oregonstate.edu/education

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

Project Title: *Effective Social Justice Practice in Higher Education: A Qualitative Study of Experienced Student Affairs Professionals*
 Principal Investigator: Tom Scheuermann, University Housing and Dining, College Student Services Administration
 Co-Investigator(s): Amy Folz, OSU Extended Campus

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?

You are being invited to take part in a research study designed to investigate social justice practice among experienced student affairs professionals. Specifically, this research study will consist of qualitative case studies of experienced student affairs professionals. We will gather information about how participants define social justice, how participants came to be oriented toward social justice, stories of dealing with interpersonal conflicts around race, sexual orientation, etc., attributes of participants relating to social justice practice, and essential skills of integrating social justice into student affairs work. Data will be collected through interviews with a small number of experienced student affairs professionals, as well as soliciting written information. The data from this study will be used in professional conference proposals/presentations and possible publication in professional journals and magazines.

We are studying this in order to identify themes that might inform others about social justice practice and ways to incorporate it into student affairs work. We also hope this study will inform student affairs professionals of the risks and benefits of the choice to incorporate social justice practice into their work, as well as attributes and skills they may want to cultivate.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS FORM?

This consent form gives you the information you will need to help you decide whether to be in the study or not. Please read the form carefully. You may ask any questions about the research, the possible risks and benefits, your rights as a volunteer, and anything else that is not clear.

When all of your questions have been answered, you can decide if you want to be in this study or not.

WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?

You are being invited to take part in this study because a colleague at Oregon State University has referred you to us. You have been identified as being in the field of student affairs for over ten years and being effective at integrating social justice practice into your work as a student affairs professional.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN DURING THIS STUDY AND HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE?

The interview questions will be submitted to you in a written form several days before the interview is conducted. One of the researchers will then conduct an in-person interview with you, which we will audio record, with your consent. Audio recording is not optional, but is required as part of the research to accurately capture your responses. These interviews will be semi-structured, comprised of open-ended questions generated by us. One of the researchers will conduct the interviews in a secure and confidential location, which will be chosen in conjunction with you. In the event that meeting in person is not feasible, we will perform the interview via phone or (preferably) videoconference, with your consent.

In the second part of the data collection, we will be asking you to respond in writing to another question. This question will be submitted to you with the interview questions. While we request that you complete the written portion before the interview, you also have the option to complete it after the interview. You may submit it to us during the interview, or afterward using the postage-paid, self-addressed envelope I will provide. To protect the confidentiality of these documents, they will be addressed to a PO Box accessible only to the researchers. You will have the option at any time to decline to answer any questions, although your full participation is appreciated.

If you agree to take part in this study, your involvement will last for 3-7 hours, depending on your desired level of engagement. This will include 1-3 hours for the interview, 1-3 hours for the written statement, as well as up to 1 hour spent in correspondence and follow-up. Any follow-up correspondence with you will be completed within one month of all data being collected from you, or the notice of your termination of involvement in this study.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF THIS STUDY?

The possible risks and/or discomforts associated with the procedures described in this study includes feeling emotional distress if the subject matter inadvertently triggers memories or brings up strong emotional reactions. The interview questions are designed to gain information

on the attributes, skills, and knowledge of a participant relating to their social justice practice, not to gain personal information or evaluate the type or depth of personal discomfort a participant may have experienced while implementing social justice practice. You will be able to refuse to answer any questions, for any reason with no penalty.

Email transmission cannot be guaranteed to be secure or error-free as information could be intercepted, corrupted, lost, destroyed, arrive late or incomplete, or contain viruses.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF THIS STUDY?

There may be no direct benefits for being in this study. However, we hope that, in the future, other people might benefit from this study because it could encourage others to think about social justice practice and how it can enhance their student affairs work.

WILL I BE PAID FOR PARTICIPATING?

You will not be paid for being in this research study.

WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION I GIVE?

The information you provide during this research study will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law. To help protect your confidentiality, we will only use identification code numbers or your chosen pseudonym to refer to you on any audio recordings or documents, and in presentations and publications.

One aspect of this study involves making audio recordings of you. This is done so the researchers can conduct an in-depth analysis of the interview data. All audiotapes and written data will only be shared with members of the research team, the OSU Institutional Review Board, and the transcribers of the audiotapes. No identifying information about yourself or the situations you describe will be made public at any time. This informed consent document and all audiotapes and written responses will be stored in a locked filing cabinet for the duration of the study and then destroyed upon its completion.

If the results of this project are published your identity will not be made public.

DO I HAVE A CHOICE TO BE IN THE STUDY?

If you decide to take part in the study, it should be because you really want to volunteer. You will not lose any benefits or rights you would normally have if you choose not to volunteer. You can stop at any time during the study and still keep the benefits and rights you had before volunteering.

You will not be treated differently if you decide to stop taking part in the study. You will be free to skip any interview or written questions that you would prefer not to answer. If you choose to withdraw from this project before it ends, the researchers may keep information collected about you and this information may be included in study reports.

WHAT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?

If you have any questions about this research project, please contact:
Tom Scheuermann at 541-737-0692, tom.scheuermann@oregonstate.edu,
or Amy Folz at 541-908-9075, amy.folz@oregonstate.edu.

If you have questions about your rights as a participant, please contact the Oregon State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) Human Protections Administrator, at (541) 737-4933 or by email at IRB@oregonstate.edu.

Your signature indicates that this research study has been explained to you, that your questions have been answered, and that you agree to take part in this study. You will receive a copy of this form.

Participant's Name (printed):

(Signature of Participant)

(Date)

Oregon State University • IRB Study #:3689 Approval Date: 9/25/07 Expiration Date: 9/24/08

Appendix B

Email request sent to potential participants

*Bracketed text was individualized for each participant

[Name],

[As you may know] I am a student in the College Student Services Administration program at OSU, and am working on a thesis about social justice practice in student affairs. I am hoping you can help!

I am looking for study participants who:

- *have more than ten years of experience in student affairs or related positions;
- *self-identify as a social justice advocate; and
- *have been directly involved in resolving a crisis or conflict around difference or diversity on at least one occasion during the course of their career.

If you feel that you fit these criteria, I would greatly appreciate your involvement in my study. As a participant, I will ask you to answer a set of questions with two sections: written and interview. The written questions will ask about a specific situation; I will ask you complete this part before we meet. The interview itself should take about one hour, but may take shorter or longer depending on the length of your answers. Please read the attached letter which explains this study in more detail.

If you can help, please call or email me before [date]. I will then follow up with more information.

Thanks,
Amy

Amy Folz

College Student Services Administration
Oregon State University
amy.folz@oregonstate.edu
541-908-9075

Attachment: IRB Consent Document [see Appendix A]

Appendix C

Follow-up email to new participants

*Bracketed text was individualized for each participant

[Hi Name],

Thank you! I've attached a document explaining in more detail what will happen in the study. Please read it over, and email me back with any questions or concerns you have.

I have also re-attached the IRB consent form - I will need to get that taken care of before we begin. Please let me know when it will be convenient for me to drop by for a few minutes, and I will bring a copy for you to sign.

Alternately, you can print, sign, and send a copy to:
Amy Folz c/o Connie Patterson
Forest Resources
280 Peavy Hall

I would like to schedule the interview before mid-February, if possible (the sooner the better for me!) - so please let me know a couple 1-hour time-slots that will work for you, and where you would like to meet. A quiet location would be preferred. My schedule is quite flexible, so I am happy to arrange the meeting around your schedule. If you aren't yet sure what times will work for you, feel free to wait and look over your calendar at a later time.

Thanks again for being a part of my study. Don't hesitate to ask any questions you still have.

Amy

Attachment: Clarification and Questions for Participants (see Appendix D)

Attachment: IRB Consent Document (see Appendix A)

Appendix D

Clarification and Questions for Participants

Social Justice Practice in Higher Education

Welcome, and thank you for agreeing to be a part of this research study! I am excited to be working on this topic, and to have the chance to talk to people who have much more experience than me in both student affairs and in social justice practice.

Below I introduce my research and goals for the study, and list my research questions. I hope that your knowledge about the purposes of this study will allow you to participate fully and without reservations. Please let me know at any time if you have questions or desire clarification, and also if you wish to end your participation in this study.

Thanks,
Amy

Research Goals

The goal of my research is to gather the specific experiences and cumulative knowledge of participants around their experience of and approach to social justice within a higher education context. I want to hear about your experiences, beliefs, thoughts, and feelings in your own words. I intend for this thesis to be a compilation of experiences from various professionals in higher education, so I do not have expectations about what you might or should say. For this reason, I will be using a research framework that will allow me to analyze the “data” using your words and the themes that arise from them. I hope it will be interesting to compare various experiences for common themes, which could help other student affairs personnel in their own personal and professional development.

I have attempted to design the questions to be flexible for you and your experience. I hope that you take some time to ponder these questions, and then feel free to answer them in the way that makes the most sense to you. For example, you can give shorter answers to questions you feel are less relevant to your experience, and give more attention, or use as a starting points, those that do. Please know that I am not attempting to get you to talk about experiences that were deeply personal or bring up emotional pain, but rather focus on the professional side of things, as much as that is possible or desirable for you. Ultimately, I hope that you feel free to share with me as much or as little as you wish to share, keeping in mind the goals of this research project.

The Research Questions

The research questions of this study are: How do student affairs professionals come to be oriented toward social justice practice? How do student affairs professionals define social justice, in the context of higher education? What are the attributes of student affairs professionals who have integrated social justice practice into their professional practice? What essential skills are necessary to practice social justice in student affairs?

Written Questions

Please read through all of the questions, and then answer the written questions first. In my IRB application I left this open, saying that you would be able to choose to answer these before or after our meeting. After further reflection, I decided that I would greatly appreciate your answering them first, before we meet. I hope that this will help set a context for your interview answers, and also simply get you thinking about the topic ahead of time.

Please use word-processing software (Microsoft Word, WordPerfect, etc.) to type your answers. Do NOT email this document to me. I will bring a flash drive to our interview to save and transport your document – this will prevent any possible confidentiality breach by sending it via email. Please contact me if any of the above will not work for you, and we can discuss alternatives.

1. Please describe a conflict or crisis around an issue of difference or diversity between groups or individuals that you resolved in the course of your job duties.
 - a. During this narrative, please describe the motivations that guided you while attempting to find and reach a resolution.
 - b. Additionally, please briefly state whether or not you felt your actions were aligned with your institution's stated mission and values, and why.

Interview Questions

1. How do you define social justice? How do you define social justice in the context of higher education, your institution, or your work as a student affairs professional, if differently?
2. Why did you come to be oriented toward practicing social justice in your career?
3. How did you acquire the knowledge and skills you use in practicing social justice in your career?
4. How have you integrated social justice practice into your current position?
5. Has your social justice framework influenced your leadership or managerial style? Has it influenced the way you structure your unit or department? If so, how?
6. What do you think the field of student affairs needs to continue improving its approach toward social justice?