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CULTIVATING SOCIAL JUSTICE PEDAGOGICAL KNOWLEDGE AND SKILL:
A SUPERINTENDENT'S DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL JUSTICE PEDAGOGICAL
KNOWLEDGE AND SKILL

Dissertation
By

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with Julia Bott, Derrick Ciesla, and Rodolfo Morales

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Cultivating Social Justice Pedagogical Knowledge and Skill: A Superintendent's Development of
Social Justice Pedagogical Knowledge and Skill

by

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Abstract

Many district and school leaders have leveraged instructional leadership or social justice leadership to advance student achievement for minoritized students. While research has examined these approaches separately, we identify a potential gap at the nexus between instructional and social justice leadership. In particular, we find a need for further research that examines how leaders bridge instructional and social justice leadership practices, to disrupt educational inequities. Our study examines how educational leaders weave instructional and social justice leadership skills to cultivate others' social justice pedagogical knowledge and skill. Employing a collective case study framework, this study explores how a mid-sized urban district's superintendent and school leaders cultivated and promoted the social justice pedagogical knowledge and skill of others. Data was collected through interviews, surveys, and document reviews. The primary research participants included one superintendent, two assistant superintendents, three central office leaders, five school leaders, and six teachers. Our findings highlight four themes: the importance of leaders' critical self-reflection perceptions of district-level infrastructure and strategic planning, school-level instructional infrastructure and capacity building, and gaps in social justice pedagogical skill. This research has implications for

practice, policy, and existing literature related to the cultivation and enactment of social justice

pedagogical knowledge and skill across diverse contexts.

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Urban school districts strive to meet the needs of increasingly diverse learners and address the pervasive and enduring opportunity gaps impacting minoritized students* (Hussar & Bailey, 2013). Since the establishment of public education, racially, ethnically, linguistically, and ability-diverse students have faced persistent barriers that directly impede access to high-quality teaching and learning (Edmonds, 1979; Delpit, 1995; Khalifa et al., 2019, Ezzani, 2021). Many factors contribute to the lower achievement of minoritized students, including teacher beliefs, assumptions, and biases rooted in deficit thinking, (Diamond, Randolph & Spillane, 2004; Ott & Kohli, 2022), the disjuncture between school culture and student identity (Delpit, 1998; Ladson-Billings, 1999; Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2007; Kohli, 2012; Goodwin, 2016), as well as the disproportionate identification and segregation of low-income students of color within restrictive special educational settings (Artiles & Zamora-Durán, 1997; Artiles, 2003; Blanchett, 2006; Kozleski & Thorius, 2014; Tefera et al.,, 2023).

Many districts and leaders have responded to these inequities by leveraging instructional leadership as a central strategy to develop educators' content knowledge and pedagogical skill to accelerate the achievement of underperforming students (Elmore, 2007; Hallinger & Wang, 2015; Hopkins et al., 2013; Chenoweth, 2021). Instructional leadership generally refers to leadership behaviors that prioritize instruction and student learning through the work of visioning and goal setting, fostering a culture of learning and actively supporting curriculum, instruction and assessment in service to student achievement (Murphy, 1990; Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Hallinger, 2005; Grissom et al., 2013).

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[1] This chapter was jointly written by Julia Bott, Derrick Ciesla, Rodolfo Morales and Marybeth O'Brien

Several scholars posit that these conceptions of instructional leadership fall short by omitting the effects of institutional and structural barriers on minoritized [2]students (e.g., Khalil, D., & Brown, E., 2015; Mckenzie et al., 2008; Theoharis, G., 2007). These scholars assert that the current educational landscape demands equity-centered school and district leaders who can leverage social justice leadership skills to disrupt educational inequities (Brown, 2004; Theoharis, 2007; Rigby, 2014). Specifically, they argue that social justice leadership is a way to increase the belongingness, outcomes, and purpose of schooling for many minoritized students (Alsbury & Whitaker, 2007; DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2004; O'Malley & Capper, 2015; Theoharis, 2007; Theoharis & O'Toole, 2011).

While previous research has looked at these approaches separately, we integrate them, exploring how social justice leaders leverage instructional leadership strategies to address educational inequities (Shaked, 2020). Referring to this integration as "social justice pedagogical knowledge and skill" (Dyches & Boyd, 2017), our study will examine how school and district leaders cultivate and promote educators' (administrators and teachers) social justice pedagogical knowledge and skill (SJPKS).

O'Brien's study investigates how a superintendent develops their social justice leadership: critical consciousness, knowledge, and skills to enact "just" practices that contribute to improving schools, coupled with the way they develop capacity within the district and school leaders. Bott's study examines how principals leverage instructional leadership skills to influence the development of educators' SJPKS. Ceisla's study examines how principals disrupt deficit thinking and encourage asset-based instructional practices to promote the success of Black males

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[2] The term "minoritized" is a concept that refers to groups or individuals who have been marginalized, disadvantaged, or subjected to social, political, or economic inequality based on their race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, or other characteristics

who have experienced trauma. Morales' study explores the strategies and approaches used by school principals to confront teachers' race-based bias towards students as well as explore how racial differences among principals and teachers may influence the strategic approaches taken. Table 1, highlights the individual questions each researcher explores, providing further specificity and nuance to our study.

Table 1.1

Overarching and Individual Research Questions

Overarching Research Question	
How do educational leaders cultivate and promote social justice pedagogical knowledge and skill?	
Researcher	Individual Research Questions
Marybeth O'Brien	1. How does a superintendent develop and understand their own social justice pedagogical knowledge and skill? 2. How does a superintendent enact their social justice pedagogical knowledge and skill to develop the capacity of district and school leaders?
Julia Bott	1. How do principals understand social justice pedagogical knowledge and skill? 2. What instructional leadership practices do principals employ to grow teachers' social justice pedagogical knowledge and skill? 3. How do teachers experience these practices?

Derrick Ciesla	1. How do school leaders disrupt deficit thinking and encourage asset-based instructional practices to promote the success of Black males who have experienced trauma?
Rodolfo Morales	1. How do principals - as racial beings working in contexts imbued with individual, institutional, and cultural racism – confront teachers' race-based bias toward students?

Literature Review

Two bodies of empirical literature situate our study: instructional leadership and social justice leadership. In the domain of instructional leadership, studies focus on supervision and evaluation, professional learning, collaborative data-driven decision-making, and leadership content knowledge. Studies in the domain of social justice leadership focus on disrupting deficit mindsets, developing critical consciousness, and developing social justice pedagogical knowledge. Reviewing these two bodies of literature, we conclude that existing research does not fully capture the interrelationship between instructional and social justice leadership, specifically how instructional leadership is implemented to advance the goals of social justice leadership.

Instructional Leadership

Instructional leadership has been identified as a key lever for the advancement of student achievement at both the school and district level. Extensive research considers the roles and responsibilities of the principal as instructional leader (e.g., Robinson et al., 2008; Leithwood et al., 2004). Research shows that central office leaders of successful

districts "spent significant proportions of their workweek personally guiding and leading the instructional processes in their districts" (Hentschke et al. 2009, p. 331), and that effective school and district leaders organize systems to support and focus on instructional improvement (Adams, 2016; Barnes et al., 2010, Malinga et al., 2022)

Seminal research identifies several essential components of instructional leadership that directly impact the quality of classroom instruction and student learning (Edmonds, 1979; Hallinger & Murphy, 1985). Hallinger and Murphy's (1985) conceptual framework for principal instructional leadership identifies three core dimensions: defining the school leithvision, managing the instructional program, and promoting a positive learning climate (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985; Leithwood, 1994; O'Donnell & White, 2005). Within these dimensions, school and district leaders often leverage supervision and evaluation, professional learning, data-driven practices, and leadership content knowledge to build the pedagogical knowledge and skill of educators. In the sections below, we provide a description of each dimension .

Supervision and Evaluation

Instructional leaders play a pivotal role in ensuring the implementation of teacher evaluations and feedback cycles. Researchers have found that instructional leaders use their discretion when supervising and evaluating teachers (Donaldson & Woulfin, 2018; Jones et al., 2022; Marsh et al., 2017). For example, to ensure the effectiveness of feedback cycles, principals may prioritize the use of teacher evaluation systems as a mechanism for coaching as opposed to a state policy for evaluations and accountability (Donaldson & Woulfin, 2018). In studying the motivations behind the inflation of evaluation scores, Jones et al. (2022) found that principals

may provide a higher rating to enable productive feedback conversations and prioritize teacher morale and principal-teacher relationships. As a result, school leaders preserve their time and maintain their self-efficacy as instructional leaders. However, school leaders may also inflate scores to avoid necessary but challenging conversations.

Organizational structures and environmental contexts also influence the implementation of teacher evaluation systems. Marsh et al.'s (2017) study examines how the organizational context of New Orleans schools impacted the implementation of a new teacher evaluation system. The study found that the system's implementation was shaped by the district's decentralization, the charter school system, and the district's response to Hurricane Katrina. Governing systems, leader-capacity, and pre-existing collaborative structures influenced how schools either complied, modified, or ignored the district's expectations for teacher evaluations. For example, some school leaders modified the teacher rubric to include school-specific priorities that were influenced by the contextual realities of teaching post Hurricane Katrina. Other schools adopted a new rubric all together, whereas some complied with state expectations as prescribed. The authors suggest that policymakers should consider the organizational context when designing evaluation systems and provide support for schools to adapt to local needs.

The effectiveness of teacher evaluation systems as tools for promoting professional growth, relies heavily on instructional leaders. In particular, instructional leaders with strong content knowledge, and those who empower teacher leaders and coaches, are better positioned to improve the instructional capacity of educators (Nelson et. al, 2007; Hill and Gross, 2013). Additionally, instructional leaders who can coach with student-centered feedback may also have more success in developing teachers' capacity (Allen et. al, 2011).

Guerra et. al (2022) posit that teacher evaluation itself is insufficient if cultural responsiveness is not centered during the process. In analyzing a commonly used textbook that aims to prepare principals for instructional leadership through observation and feedback, they found that culture was often obfuscated throughout the text leading to implicit exclusion of culture. While the unit of analysis is limited to one text, this text's prominence and popularity highlights a continuing white-centric approach to observation, feedback, and evaluation. Thus, while supervision and evaluation is an essential instructional leadership practice, leaders may not possess the knowledge and skill to use a culturally responsive lens and therefore negate the efforts to improve teacher practice.

In sum, current literature shows how administrators engage in supervision and evaluation to identify trends in educators' pedagogical knowledge, skills and practices. These trends can inform the content, structure and integration of professional learning opportunities school leaders develop, to which we now turn.

Professional Learning

A key lever that school and district leaders utilize to influence educator instructional capacity is professional development (Newman, et al. 2000; Liu & Hallinger, 2018; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008; Hallinger and Heck, 2011). Research on the impact of professional development in schools indicates that it is most effective when it directly addresses instruction and student learning outcomes, fosters educator collaboration, and provides opportunities for sustained, continuous learning (Smylie et al., 2001; Garet et al., 2001; Youngs & King, 2002).

Researchers have found that in order for professional development to build content knowledge and develop pedagogical skill, leaders must ground it in a coherent framework of

teacher and student learning (Youngs & King, 2002; Penuel et al., 2007). For example, Sebastian & Allensworth's (2012) conducted a multi-school research study on the impact of secondary-level principal leadership on instruction and achievement. They found that academic demand and classroom behavior were stronger among educators within schools who perceived that they participated in high-quality professional development and where there was clear alignment and coherence within the instructional programming of the school.

This was echoed in Donaldson's (2013) examination of the opportunities and barriers school leaders' face in the development of educator effectiveness. In a cross-district study of 30 principals' perceptions of the factors that influence educator improvement, Donaldson identified professional development as the most referenced and utilized human capacity lever. In addition, Donaldson found that when principals received more extensive development in building educators' instructional capacity, they considered themselves to be more successful and impactful in positively influencing educators' instructional practices. Thus, the development of principal knowledge and pedagogical skills for instructional leadership can influence the quality and coherence of educator learning at the school level.

Similarly, districts regularly leverage professional development to build the capacity of principals and their leadership teams (Waters & Marzano, 2006; Honig & Rainey, 2015; Leithwood, 2013). For example, Barnes and colleagues' (2010) longitudinal research study on the impact of a sustained district-based professional development program examined the transformation of principals from managerial to instructional leaders. Most of the participating leaders reported a deeper understanding of instructional leadership practices, including why and how to change current practices. These "refinements" in practice and increased levels of strategic

thinking and planning articulated by many leaders occurred not only because of what they were learning but, of equal importance, because of how their learning was structured (p. 263). Specifically, district based professional development participants were engaged in a "community of practice" model, through which they had facilitated opportunities to actively learn with their job-alike peers. Thus the district based professional development provided school leaders with "time, content, connections" and "instructional formats," paired with "spiraling curriculum" to deepen and extend principal learning and scaffold application (p. 255).

Additionally, in a longitudinal study, Adams' (2016) explored the impact of district-implemented professional learning on school principal instructional leadership skills. The study yielded evidence of growth in school leader communication and facilitation skills directly related to educator instructional knowledge, pedagogy, and practice. However, much like the findings from Barnes et al., (2010), the impact of professional learning on school leaders' instructional leadership practice is directly related to the content, structure, and process for leadership development. In this context, system leaders are trained to facilitate a collaborative inquiry model for principal learning strategically designed to develop leaders' capacity as reflective practitioners and collaborative learners. In essence, the focus and structure of the sustained professional learning resulted in increased leader effectiveness in active listening, prompting, and probing. This, in turn, translated to clearer communication of the instructional vision, more effective facilitation of educator learning, and increased opportunities for collaborative planning within teams of educators and leaders. Thus, the quality, structure, and sustainment of professional learning directly impacted the principal's instructional leadership skills.

Professional learning is regularly utilized to cultivate school leader and educator instructional knowledge and skill. However, effective professional learning must also be responsive to data. Therefore, school and district leaders design systems and structures to support instructional decision making. The following section describes how leaders organize, implement and support data-driven decisions to develop educator knowledge and skill and sustain instructional improvements.

Collaborative Data-driven Decision Making

The use of data to drive instructional decision-making is a common and integral strategy to both school and district-level instructional reform initiatives (Spillane & Miele, 2007). At the school level, researchers have examined how school leaders set the conditions for effective data use through selecting data (Farrell & Marsh, 2016), framing the purpose and guiding principles for data use (Park et al., 2013), supporting educator sense-making (Datnow & Hubbard, 2016; Farrell & Marsh, 2016), and building collaborative and high functioning teams (Young, 2006). Furthermore, studies indicate that because the knowledge and skills needed to effectively use data are distinct and complex, and because so many forms of data exist (Marsh, Bertrand, & Huguet, 2015), educators and leaders require targeted opportunities to develop strong assessment literacy and inquiry skills that lead to effective instructional adjustments (Mandinach & Gummer, 2013).

Park's (2018) case study analysis illuminates how principals and instructional coaches in elementary schools facilitated "data conversations and routines" to develop educators' data inquiry skills and inform instructional decision-making (p. 628). Park found that although the establishment of routines created the structure and conditions for learning, the particular data

discussion moves employed by the leaders were essential in developing educators' inquiry stance and disrupting deficit thinking. Three specific discussion moves that leaders leveraged were triangulation to develop a deeper understanding of the context, reframing to advance an asset-based approach to problem-solving, and pedagogical linking to help educators connect student learning to instructional practices and curricular resources. Thus, effective data-driven instructional decision-making requires leaders to establish collaborative structures and enact strategic facilitation moves in order to translate to effective instructional practices.

The role of data-driven instructional decision-making in district-level reform is equally complex. Slavin et al.'s (2012) longitudinal study of district-wide data reform strategies sponsored by the Center for Data-Driven Reform in Education (CDDRE) demonstrates how multiple factors contributed to data interpretation, implementation, and impact on student achievement. Specifically, the CDDRE provided district and school-level leaders with support, not only interpreting root causes from their benchmark data but of equal importance, selecting and implementing instructional programs backed by rigorous research and targeted to their areas of need. While findings did not indicate significant growth in student achievement in years one or two when the focus was on assessment literacy and interpretation, there were positive, statistically significant effects during years three and four. This is when district and school leaders and educators began to take action by supporting educators to make concrete and targeted shifts to instructional practices and/or implement research-based programs to address gaps. These findings illuminate the complex interrelationship of data-driven instructional decision-making at both the district and school level. Furthermore, they highlight the importance of balancing efforts to build leaders' assessment literacy with action to change teaching and

learning. Strong district and school instructional leaders must do both.

While supervision and evaluation, professional learning and data-driven decision making can be effective strategies for educator development and school improvement, the quality and impact of these practices is also dependent upon the content knowledge of the educational leader (Stein & Nelson, 2003). Therefore, we will round out our review of instructional leadership through a synthesis of the research on leadership content knowledge.

Leadership Content Knowledge

Pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1983) has been influential in understanding how teachers integrate content knowledge with pedagogical knowledge to make effective instructional decisions. Stein and Nelson (2003) have extended this concept to educational leadership by defining leadership content knowledge as the understanding of content subject matter and how it must be transformed for the purposes of instructional leadership.

Stein and Nelson (2003) differentiate how leadership content knowledge is used at different levels of the organization. Their framework delineates the progression of content knowledge within schools. Stein and Nelson argue that the first layer of content knowledge used within a school organization begins with an investigation of a subject matter. This progresses to how educators and students engage with the subject matter for the purposes of teaching and learning. The final layer includes how principals and districts develop the pedagogical expertise of educators. The authors posit that leaders have leadership content knowledge at all levels of an organization, albeit becoming less fine-grained in their use and application of it as administrative responsibilities increase.

Principals' leadership content knowledge affects the delivery of feedback they offer

teachers (Nelson, 2010; Overholt and Szabocsik, 2013; Stein and Nelson, 2003). For example, Nelson (2010) conducted a case study of principals with different leadership content knowledge profiles. They found that a principal with strong leadership content knowledge engaged teachers in open-ended questions about students' mathematical thinking as part of their feedback process. In stark contrast, a principal with lower leadership content knowledge provided feedback by prioritizing instructional strategies over the actual mathematical content. Fuentes and Jimerson (2020) surveyed 90 principals and found that leaders with higher levels of leadership content knowledge were more likely to engage in instructional leadership activities and provide specific and actionable feedback.

Professional development can influence principals' leadership content knowledge. For example, principals who underwent 12 hours of professional development were better prepared to understand content-specific teaching practices and provide more direct feedback to teachers of balanced literacy programs (Overholt & Szabocsik, 2013).

However, Semingson & Kerns' (2021) historical analysis of the role of phonics in literacy illuminates a potential limitation to developing leadership content knowledge. Their study highlights the chronic misalignment between professional development focused on balanced literacy and existing research on the science of reading. Thus, a leader's content knowledge may be obsolete, and therefore counterproductive to improvement efforts. In order to drive meaningful change, leaders have a responsibility to ensure their content knowledge remains current and aligned to evidence-based best practice.

Leadership content knowledge is an important component of educational leadership, as it allows leaders to understand the content subject matter and how it must be transformed for the

purposes of instructional leadership. Professional development programs should prioritize the development of leadership content knowledge. Furthermore, leaders should use this knowledge to provide specific and actionable feedback to teachers in ways that lead to equitable outcomes for all students.

While effective instructional leadership practices have been shown to develop the pedagogical content knowledge and skill of educators, they may not explicitly address cultural incongruence, educator bias and/or structural and systemic barriers directly impacting minoritized students. To address these pervasive inequities, leaders must make a conscious choice to implement social justice leadership practices. In the second section of our literature review we turn to examine how social justice leadership is developed and enacted.

Social Justice Leadership

Social justice as a concept integrates the meanings of equity, fairness, and equality in society. Scholars have sought to apply this term across disciplines, including philosophy, sociology, politics, and, for this study, education. Rawls's (1971) definition of social justice builds on the underlying principle that since society is chain connected, when it is organized to benefit its least advantaged members, these benefits spread to all. Rawls emphasizes the importance of establishing a system that provides equal opportunities and resources for everyone, regardless of social status, race, ethnicity, or gender.

Education has been purported as the great equalizer; therefore, it is a site in which social justice takes center stage (Growe & Montgomery, 2003). Education is critical in promoting social justice by creating inclusive learning environments that

foster equity, diversity, and justice. School leadership, in particular, requires a "bold vision, significant knowledge, and skills, as well as the collaboration of many people" (Theoharis & Scanlan, 2021, p. xxxi). Furman (2012) asserts, "social justice focuses on the experiences of marginalized groups and inequities in educational opportunities and outcomes" (p. 194). This definition is supported by Wang (2012) as the persistent pursuit of educational equity across social identity groups in schools.

Social justice leadership encompasses a range of knowledge, skills, and practices that are unique to the context in which a leader serves. McKenzie et al. (2008) describe a core tenet of social justice leadership as instructional leadership. Specifically, they identify the two goals of social justice leadership as raising the academic achievement of all students and preparing students to live as critical citizens in society. It is paramount, therefore, for district and school-level leaders to translate these goals across the organization in order to develop educators' social justice pedagogical knowledge and close opportunity gaps (Reister et al., 2002; Khalil & Brown, 2015; Theoharis, 2007; DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014).

School and district leaders committed to social justice leverage specific practices to build the consciousness, knowledge and skill of their educators in service to the advancement of educational equity. Two social justice leadership practices central to this work are disrupting deficit mindset and cultivating critical consciousness.

Disrupting Deficit Mindset

Deficit thinking disproportionately affects the lives of underrepresented and minoritized children, families, and communities. Educators who display deficit thinking draw upon

stereotypes that have been ingrained in the mainstream psyche and that characterize minoritized communities as intellectually, morally, and culturally inferior or deviant (Gorski, 2011). Deficit thinking reinforces the notion that there is a predetermined, correct way to behave, commonly referred to as the norm, and anyone acting differently is acting at a deficit. Because those outside the norm are perceived as lacking, educators that engage in deficit thinking believe these students must be fixed and transformed into biased-based conceptions of the ideal in order to succeed (Wong, 2022). School leaders, therefore, are responsible for challenging stereotypes and advocating for an inclusive and equal society. This can be accomplished by developing educators' capacity to generate counter narratives to stereotypes, promoting cultural responsiveness, recognizing cultural strengths and assets, and fostering critical consciousness (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Perry et al., 2003).

School leaders can use data driven decision making (DDDM) to disrupt deficit thinking (Park, 2018). It has been found that leaders can use data to highlight issues like educational opportunity gaps and inspire schools to take collective action (Park et al., 2013; Skrla et al., 2004). The examination of data by educators has been a catalyst for change in practice and heightened awareness of inequities in situations where educators were confronted with evidence that challenged their low expectations about the abilities of students. In particular, local implementation levels (DDDM) have been linked to a technical, rational model of continuous improvement practice. A provocative study by Parks (2018), found the following data discussion moves for disrupting deficit thinking:

- Triangulation- Using multiple data sources to confirm or disconfirm beliefs.

- Reframing Deficit thinking- Redirecting assumptions or beliefs about student learning to one that highlights their strengths.

- Pedagogical Linking and Student Centered Positioning- Examining relationships between student thinking to data and specific instruction practices.

Similarly, in a conversation captured by Horn & Little (2010), another way to disrupt deficit thinking is to use the strategy known as extending moves. Extending moves are explained as when someone asks another person or team to elaborate on how they came to a conclusion. Extending moves can disrupt deficit thinking in education by promoting a more inclusive and strengths-based approach to student learning through differentiation (Tomlinson, 2008). These extending moves build on ideas or data that have been presented in past conversations. Although that is a part of the purpose, the goal is not simply to clarify and create shared understanding. The use of these moves also leads toward specifying and revising the meaning of student learning data and the scope of instructional needs. Creating clarity and shared understanding is part of the goal (Horn & Little, 2010).

Therefore, data must be conceptualized within leadership theories and practices that place equity and learning at the center because both data and data use are socially, culturally, and politically co-constructed. Furthermore, educators interpret data through their preexisting beliefs and experiences, many of which are riddled with bias. In their literature review on culturally responsive school leadership, Khalifa, et al. (2016), propose data-driven culturally responsive school leadership as a way to align policy, curriculum, and school reform with values for equity and culturally relevant practices (e.g., such as equity audits). School leaders must be armed with strategies and practices to disrupt and counter deficit narratives (Park, 2018; Knapp et al., 2007).

In order to do this, school leaders should understand that they are cultural beings who are influenced by multidimensional aspects of cultural identity, even as they attempt to carry out leadership duties. Literature encourages such leaders to examine their own biases and how they impact their professional practices (Dantley, 2005a, 2008; Furman, 2012; Madhlangobe & Gordon, 2012).

School leaders committed to social justice engage their communities, including students, families and educators in culturally responsive ways (Khalifa et al., 2016). However, in order for leaders to be truly responsive to their communities' needs, they must engage in on-going, critical self-reflection about their own biases and acknowledge the structural and systemic forces that contribute to inequities within their context (Freire, 2000). Therefore, we now turn to the cultivation of critical consciousness as an essential strategy for social justice leadership.

Cultivating Critical Consciousness

Research indicates that teachers need to thoroughly understand their own cultures and the cultures of different ethnic groups, as well as how this affects teaching and learning behaviors, to effectively educate minoritized students (Gay & Kirkland, 2003). Furthermore, literature demonstrates that many White teachers enter preservice programs and schools with little previous contact with racial groups other than their own (Milner, 2003) and with negative perceptions of students of color (Terrill & Mark, 2000). Therefore, leaders committed to social justice must cultivate the conditions to develop educator critical consciousness so they can understand their own biases, counter oppressive forces and empower students to become critical citizens for positive change (Seider & Graves, 2020).

Critical consciousness was developed by Brazilian educator Paulo Freire as an approach to help rural Brazilian peasants learn to read the written word and read the world (Freire, 2000). Critical consciousness has been conceptualized as having three components: critical reflection, recognition and rejection of societal inequities, political efficacy, one's ability to effect change, and critical action, actions taken to change society, (Watts et al., 2011). Research has suggested that fostering a commitment to the identification and disruption of systemic forces perpetuating inequities can be a gateway to academic motivation and achievement for minoritized students (El-Amin et al., 2017).

Partnerships between youth and adults can be a powerful force in developing motivation and action among more minoritized youth (Kirshner, 2015). For instance, in one study by (Christens & Kirshner 2011) when youth begin to exercise agency through collective ventures with adults, they not only strengthen their socio-political awareness, but also experience gains in psychological empowerment, both of which contribute to civic and political participation. Their findings demonstrate that collaborations that provide youth with access to broader social networks as well as opportunities to partner with adults on social campaigns addressing inequity, can strengthen youth's ability to resist, challenge, and contest societal inequalities.

While existing research explores the nexus between instructional and social justice leadership as a strategy to develop the social justice knowledge and practices of aspiring leaders (Capper et al., 2006; Furman, 2012) and teachers (Dover, 2013; Dyches & Boyd, 2017; Mayne, 2019), there is a gap in the research as to how school and district leaders leverage instructional leadership to build the capacity of educators as social justice practitioners. This is significant, because district and school leaders are charged with the dual responsibilities of developing the

quality and fidelity of the instructional core through curriculum, pedagogy and assessment and disrupting structural and systemic barriers perpetuating inequities within their distinct contexts. A lack of coherence and integration between these goals can result in fractured instructional and social justice initiatives, thereby undermining implementation and reinforcing a problematic tension between the advancement of social equity and academic excellence. Our proposed research study seeks to contribute to filling this gap. We explore a possible bridge mediating this tension by examining how district and school level administrators intersect instructional and social justice leadership to build educator capacity as social justice practitioners.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for our proposed study draws on the instructional concepts of curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, and the social justice concepts of critical consciousness, social justice knowledge, and social justice skill to situate our work at the intersection of instructional and social justice leadership. Capper et al. (2006) posit a conceptual framework for leadership development that explicitly integrates the concepts of pedagogical content knowledge and social justice knowledge. Dyches and Boyd (2017) characterize this integration of SJPKS. Our conceptual framework draws from this scholarship, focusing on the relationship between instructional leadership and social justice leadership as it applies to leadership practices at the school and district levels (see Figure 1.1).

Pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) is a crucial aspect of effective teaching, which requires teachers to possess knowledge of both the content being taught and the pedagogical strategies needed to convey that content to students effectively (Shulman, 1987). As reflected in Capper's model, pedagogical content knowledge is cultivated by attending to the specific

curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment practices used to grow the capacity of educational leaders as social justice practitioners (Figure 1.1, left).

Social justice knowledge refers to what leaders must "believe, know and do to lead socially just schools" (Capper et al., 2006, p. 212). This incorporates three dimensions (Figure 1.1, right). First is the development of critical consciousness, emphasizing the importance of building

the leaders' awareness of "power relations" and "social construction" (p. 212). Second, it includes the need to build the leaders' knowledge base of "evidence-based practices," such as the benefits of inclusionary practices, that contribute to an equitable school (p. 213). Finally, it integrates skills, such as facilitating equity-centered data conversations, to enact justice in schools.

Figure 1.1

Conceptual Framework for Social Justice Pedagogical Knowledge and Skill

Adapted from Capper et al. (2006) and Dyches & Boyd (2017)
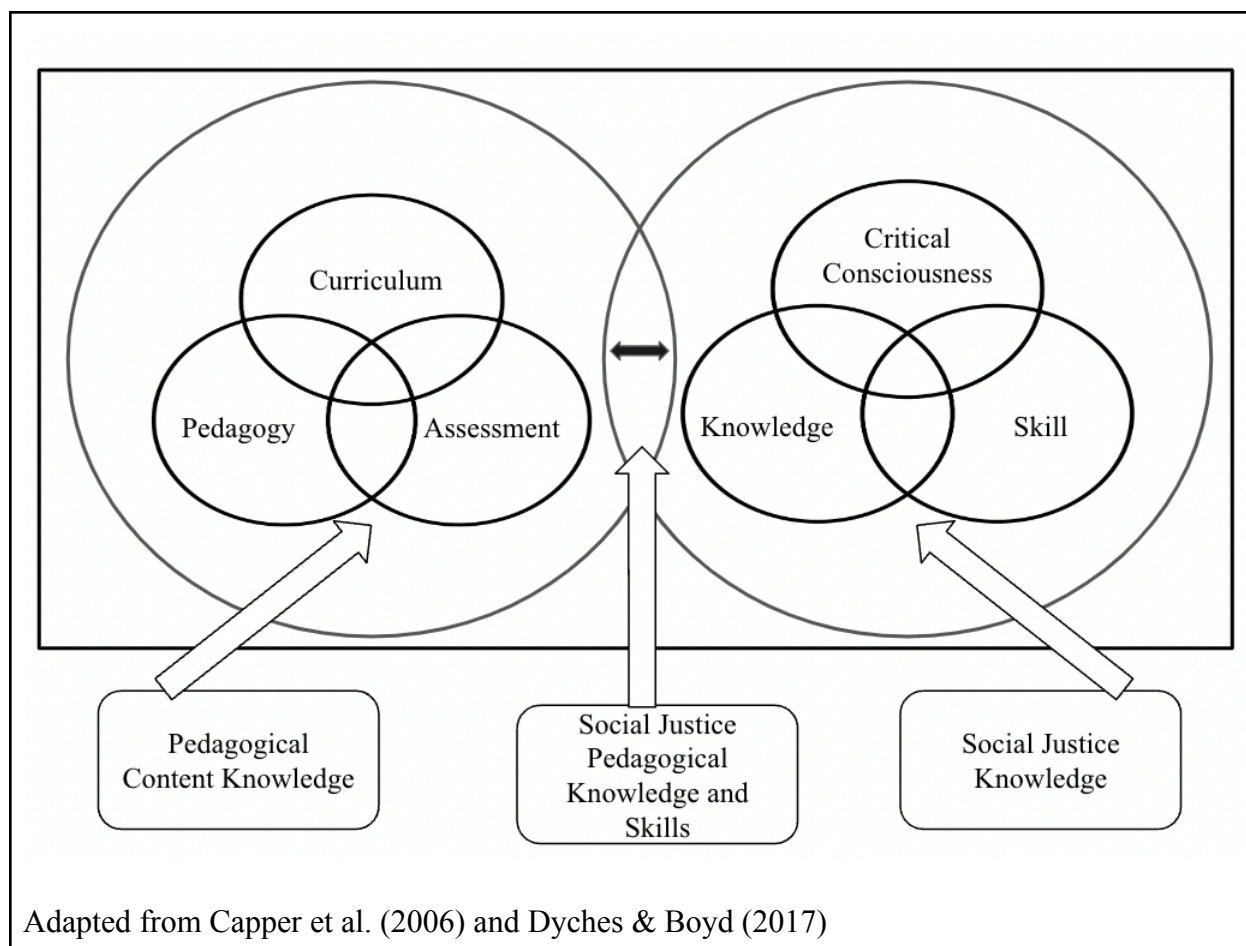
Capper and colleagues (2006) argue that in order to develop leaders for social justice, leadership preparation programs must bridge social justice knowledge with pedagogical content knowledge, a concept more explicitly defined as the development of social justice pedagogical knowledge. Our research focuses on practicing school and district leaders. We seek to examine the ways in which these administrators develop and apply SJPKS. Adapting the work of Capper et al. and Dyches & Boyd (2017), our framework explicates specific domains of SJPKS (SJPKS; see Figure 1.2).

Figure 1.2

Domains of Social Justice Pedagogical Knowledge and Skill

Assessment: assessing the overall effectiveness and the impact of the program on the individuals in the district and/or schools and their ability to engage in the work	Assessment: how the consciousness, knowledge, and skills of future leaders are assessed		
Pedagogy: the way the content is delivered across the district and in schools to "change "what and how we teach"	Pedagogy & CC: teaching methods that raises leaders and teachers consciousness about power, privilege, and associated issues.	Pedagogy & Knowledge: teaching methods focused on specific knowledge about related theories, subject areas, and evidence-based practices pertaining to equity	Pedagogy & Skills: teaching strategies that lead to the implementation of evidence-based practices or the practice that bridges the theories
Curriculum: content areas of the instructional program.	Curriculum & CC: content that raises the leaders and teachers consciousness about power, privilege, and associated issues	Curriculum, & Knowledge: curriculum focused on specific knowledge about related theories, subject areas, and evidence-based practices pertaining to equity	Curriculum & Skills: content that leads to the implementation of evidence-based practices or the practice that bridges the theories
Instructional (vertical axis) Social Justice (horizontal axis)	Critical Consciousness (CC): leaders and teachers embody a social justice consciousness within their belief system- deep understanding of power relations and social construction	Knowledge: leaders and teachers know evidence-based practices that can create an equitable school - example: instructional policy - shaping or reshaping the way they are delivered	Skills: performances, processes, and activities that leaders and teachers facilitate and engage others in to enact CC & knowledge to practice

Adapted Capper et al. 2006 & Dyches and Boyd 2017

Our framework explicates the knowledge and practices educators experience as they apply SJPKS (Figure 1.2, shaded sections). It maps how each aspect of building pedagogical content knowledge (namely curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment) intersects with each aspect of enacting social justice (namely critical consciousness, knowledge, and skills). For instance, the intersection of critical consciousness with curriculum details how leaders and educators leverage curriculum for the purpose of raising awareness of power, privilege, and associated issues. This may entail principals leading a professional development through which educators learn to interrogate curriculum with a lens for bias. In turn, educators may strategically apply layered texts centering diverse perspectives to develop students' understanding of counter narratives. On the other hand, the intersection of critical consciousness and assessment details how leaders and educators assess their own effectiveness in developing social justice consciousness. For example, leaders may examine educator climate survey data to determine patterns in teachers' self-perceptions of cultural awareness and action. Relatedly, educators may integrate specific texts or tasks designed to monitor students' development of critical consciousness. Our overarching conceptual framework provides a multi-faceted lens through which we can investigate the nuanced interplay between the domains of instruction, namely curriculum, pedagogy and assessment and social justice leadership, including critical consciousness, social justice knowledge and skill.

Chapter Two[3]

Research Design and Methodology

The aim of this study is to investigate how district and school leaders cultivate and promote SJPKS. Within this broad focus of our collective study, our individual studies investigated the manifestation of specific practices district and school leaders leverage to foster SJPKS within their contexts, at both the school and district level (see Table 2.1).

Table 2.1

Overview of Research Study by Group and Individual Researchers

Overview of Research Study by Group and Individual Researchers	
Overarching Research Question: How do educational leaders cultivate and promote others' social justice pedagogical knowledge and skill?	
Group Conceptual Framework SJPKS	
Theoretical Frameworks Social Justice Leadership and Instructional Leadership	
Name	**Individual Research Question**
	District Level Leadership
O'Brien	How does a superintendent develop and understand their pedagogical and social justice knowledge? How does a superintendent enact their pedagogical and

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[3] This chapter was jointly written by Julia Bott, Derrick Ciesla, Rodolfo Morales and Marybeth O'Brien

	social justice knowledge to develop the capacity of district and school leaders?

School Level Leadership	
Bott	How do principals understand social justice pedagogical knowledge and skill?
	What instructional leadership practices do principals employ to grow teacher's social justice pedagogical knowledge and skill?
	How do teachers experience these practices?
Ciesla	How do school leaders disrupt deficit thinking and encourage asset-based instructional practices to promote the success of Black males who have experienced trauma?
Morales	How do principals - as racial beings working in contexts imbued with individual, institutional, and cultural racism – confront teachers' race-based bias toward students?

In this chapter we describe our research design and methodology. We collaboratively designed protocols for collecting and analyzing data from our individual studies to ensure coherence and alignment. Furthermore, we worked together to collect data and cross-check individual data analyses using our collectively developed coding criteria. While each of us had unique foci, we engaged in the research process with an eye towards leveraging synergies.

Study Design

We employed a collective case study design to explore the research questions outlined above. (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Creswell & Gutterman, 2018; Yin, 2009). The collective case study design (Stake, 1995) was selected because multiple cases were "described and compared to provide insight into an issue" within a single school system in Massachusetts (Creswell & Gutterman, 2018, p 477). Evidence derived from multiple studies is often considered "more

compelling," and the study itself can therefore become "more robust," particularly when research procedures are replicated across sites (Herriot & Firestone, 1983, as cited in Yin, 2009, p. 53). Because case studies are bounded by place, time, and participants, this approach was applicable to the scope and limitations of our research questions, timelines, and context (Creswell & Gutternman, 2019; Yin, 2018). Thus, the collective case study methodology enabled our team to engage in an "in-depth exploration" of the specific cases within a select school system in relation to our specific research questions (Creswell & Gutterman, 2018, p. 477; Yin, 2014).

We will gather three types of data: interviews, documents and surveys. Use of a variety of data formats allowed us to triangulate our findings and deepen our collective understanding of the research problem within a specific, bounded district context (Creswell, 2014; Leedy & Ormrod, 2005, Yin, 2014). An essential first step, therefore, was to define clear parameters for our bounded site so we could contribute the "analytic generalization" of the results to a broader theory (Yin, 2018, p. 38).

Site Selection

Our selected school district met several criteria, allowing our researchers to gather evidence for each individual study. Our site was a mid- to large-sized K-12 urban district in Massachusetts, allowing the researchers to study five schools, including at least one elementary school and one secondary school. Five schools provided our researchers with enough cases to develop an "in-depth understanding" of the leadership practices, while enabling those engaging in collective case study analysis to manage the scope and ensure adequate time for exploration across all cases (Creswell & Gutterman, 2018, p. 477; Yin, 2014). Additionally, our district site has a racially and ethnically diverse student body, where there are above 40% students of Color

and no less than ten percent Black/African American. Furthermore, our site included school

leaders with three or more years of experience, and who self-identified, and/or who were

recognized within the district as principals who actively engage in social justice leadership.

Finally, our site was a district with an espoused commitment to social justice leadership.

Specifically, the district had a vision, mission, and strategic plan that clearly prioritized social

justice as an essential strategy to disrupt structural and systemic inequities impacting historically

minoritized students. Furthermore, the strategic plan integrated descriptions of specific

leadership strategies, including supervision and evaluation, professional learning, and

data-driven instructional practices that were intended to support the development of educators'

pedagogical knowledge and skill as social justice practitioners.

Participant Selection

We employed a purposive, non-probability sampling to select participants for our

research study (Miriam & Tisdell, 2016). Purposive sampling is applicable when the investigator

seeks to "discover, understand and gain insight" into a specific phenomenon (Merriam & Tisdell,

2016, p. 96). In our specific study, we sought to understand how educational leaders cultivate

SJPKS. Therefore, we invited participants to engage in our study based on specific criteria within

the groups of school leaders and educators chosen, proportionally represented by race, gender,

and grade levels. Here we describe the criteria we sought for participants overall. We identify

distinct criteria for participant selection in alignment with our respective individual research

studies in Chapter Three.

First, our study included a superintendent and five district-level administrators. This

allowed the researchers to gain insight into district-level leaders' understanding and beliefs about

their social justice pedagogical content knowledge and the district's commitment to the

advancement of social justice as a strategy to disrupt systemic inequities. Additionally, we

examined how the superintendent articulated and implemented specific instructional leadership

practices to build educators' capacity as social justice practitioners. These practices included

supervision and evaluation, professional learning related to curriculum, pedagogy and

assessment, and data-driven instructional practices.

Second, we identified five building leaders at the primary and secondary levels to be

research participants in the study. These school leaders either self-identified and/or demonstrated

through interviews or other data sources, a commitment to social justice and a track record of

success in disrupting inequities impacting minoritized student populations in their current roles.

Third, we identified between six educators in two of the respective schools, who meet the

criteria for each of our individual studies. This number of educators provided adequate insight

into how educators within a school community experienced their leaders' instructional and social

justice practices (Miriam & Tisdell, 2016). We attempted to select a balance within the groups of

leaders and teachers by race, gender, and instructed grade levels whenever possible.

Data Collection

This qualitative, collective case study required a multi-prong approach to data collection

in order to provide an in-depth analysis of the phenomenon we are investigating. In alignment

with Creswell's (2014) definition of case study research, we explored a "bounded system (or

case) . . .over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of

information (e.g., observations, interviews, audio-visual material, and documents and reports) in

order to report a case description and case-based themes" (p. 97). We collected the data from

August to January 2024.

Semi-structured Interviews

The primary source of data across all studies was interviews. Specifically, researchers conducted semi-structured interviews guided by a set of questions aligned to our research questions. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) note, "interviews are necessary when we cannot observe behaviors, feelings or how people interpret the work around them" (p.108). Thus, individual, semi-structured interviews provided valuable insight into district and school leaders' and educators' thoughts, feelings, perspectives, and experiences.

As noted previously, we applied purposive sampling to identify participants who self-identified as and/or demonstrated a commitment to social justice leadership and instructional practices (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Purposeful sampling was an appropriate strategy for the selection of interviewees because it allowed for a strategically selected sample that yielded "conclusions [which] adequately represent the average members of the population than does a sample of the same size that incorporates substantial random or accidental variation" (Maxwell, 2013, p.71). As illustrated in Table 2.2, the research team conducted 17 interviews which included the superintendent, five central office leaders, five principals, and six educators including four teachers and two department leads/associate leaders with teaching responsibilities.

Table 2.2

Interview Subjects

Participants	Number of participants
Superintendent of Schools	1
Assistant Superintendent	2
District/Central Office Leaders	3

School Leaders	5
Educators/Teachers	6

Note: The participant titles represent generic titles of personnel within school districts.

We utilized a semi-structured interview format to allow researchers to both guide the interview through a "list of questions to be explored" and respond flexibly to the "emerging worldview" of the respondents (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 111). Interviews provided researchers with insight into how district and school leaders leveraged instructional and social justice leadership practices to develop educator social justice pedagogical knowledge. The use of an interview protocol ensured coherent implementation of the interview process and consistent use of pre-developed interview questions across representative groups, including the superintendent, district leaders, school leaders, and educators (see Appendices A, and B.). The interview questions aligned with the literature review and specific components of our conceptual framework. Each study's interview protocol is outlined in chapter 3.

Interviews were conducted in person or using an online video platform (e.g., Zoom). Interviews were audio-recorded using appropriate devices, and transcribed using the web-based program Otter, and archived on the Boston College secure server. Additionally, all participants and site locations were assigned pseudonyms to protect confidentiality. Researchers reviewed transcriptions in teams to ensure accuracy. Additionally, notes annotated during the interviews were integrated into our data review. All interview participants received a letter of intent explaining the purpose of the interview, a request for signed informed consent, and a confidentiality statement.

Prior to interviewing participants, we piloted interview questions with district and school leaders outside of the case study district to ensure the content and sequencing of questions was

clear, appropriately worded, and elicited useful and relevant responses (Singleton & Straits, 2018). This illuminated potential problems with our interview protocol that were addressed before we began the collective case study in our target district. Whenever possible, we conducted interviews in pairs and all interviews were shared and available for collective review and analysis.

Other Data

With interviews as our primary source of data, we also used documents and surveys. All four of our studies used documentation. Miriam & Tisdell (2016) define documents as "a wide range of written, visual, digital and physical materials relevant to the study (including visual images)" (p. 162). For the purposes of our study, we began by gathering publicly available information from the district website, including the district vision, mission, and any strategic planning documents that address social justice priorities or initiatives (Merriam & Tisdell, p. 96). Additionally, we listened in the interviews for reference to other relevant documents, including but not limited to memos, agendas and presentations, and minutes from various district and school meetings that related to our focus area. We gathered any documents that we had reason to believe would provide insight into the prioritization, messaging, and implementation of specific social justice and instructional practices at the district and/or school level. Furthermore, we examined the collected documents utilizing a standard tool and procedure (see Appendix D).

The final source of data gathered in one study was surveys. This study utilized cross-sectional surveys to better understand teachers' perceptions of their school's work towards ameliorating race-based bias (Desimone & Carlson Le Floch, 2004). The surveys included questions selected from Panorama Education's 360° Climate Survey (Panorama, n.d.). Surveys

were administered through Qualtrics, an online platform. Despite limitations, such as the generalizability of findings, surveys have been found to "provide meaningful, substantive, and informative data that may enrich our understanding of educational processes" (Desimone & Carlson Le Floch, 2004, p.4). Additionally, survey results support our triangulation efforts as we analyzed congruences and discrepancies from survey results with data from our interviews. To increase validity, we piloted and refined questions based on feedback from pilot test groups and triangulated data (Mills & Gay, 2019).

Data Analysis

Data analysis is the process of giving meaning to data by using codes, themes, or other categorizing techniques in order to address the research topic (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Our analytic process was ongoing and iterative (Creswell, 2014). Each researcher compiled and analyzed the information gleaned from interviews, documents and surveys for the purpose of identifying emerging themes, patterns, and links. This informed the development of a system of codes for analysis. A code is "a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data" (Saldaña, 2021, p. 3). Coding is an iterative, multi-step process that allowed us to capture, interpret, and condense data.

We employed Dedoose software to support our coding and analysis of data. We used Dedoose to create a hierarchical structure for codes, organizing them into categories and subcategories. This began by importing our data sources into the program. All data was held on a secure BC server to protect confidentiality. Our team read through all of the transcribed interviews before starting the coding process. We then engaged in three separate rounds of

coding, as coding is not a single, linear process (Saldana, 2016). As a team, we engaged in an initial cycle of coding using a priori codes of themes and concepts aligned to our respective research question. Often researchers begin with a predefined list of codes, then inductively modify and add to the list as they parse the data. Our a priori codes were based on existing theories and emerging themes from the literature. These codes included aspects of instructional leadership (IL) such as: supervision and evaluation (SE), professional learning (PL), collaborative data decision-making (CDDM), and leadership content knowledge (LCK). Additionally, our a priori codes included aspects of social justice leadership (SJL) such as: critical consciousness (CC), social justice knowledge (SJK), social justice skill (SJS), and deficit-thinking (DT). For example, an excerpt of a school leader who discussed the use of professional development to engage teachers in reflecting on their bias was coded as (PL) and critical consciousness (CC).

We then engaged in a second round of coding. As Saldana (2016) explains, "The primary goal during second cycle coding is to develop a sense of categorical, thematic, conceptual, and/or theoretical organization from your array of first cycle codes" (p. 234). In this cycle we focused on rearranging codes into larger categories as needed, and coming to a consensus on code norming to ensure inter-rater reliability (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). We then moved into an inductive analysis of our data by using in vivo coding. We initiated the formation of categories and themes by the division of the qualitative data using in vivo coding, integrating the language our interviewees use when describing their experiences to label the data. These emerging themes or codes were gathered through interviews, documents and surveys in order to elicit findings. In particular, we focused on key moments within interviews that described the use of instructional

practices such as supervision and evaluation (SE), professional learning (PL), collaborative

data-driven practices (CDDM), and leadership content knowledge (LCK). We were also open to

discovering other instructional practices that may have surfaced from our interviews. For

example, when interviewing principals, they may have identified specific facilitation movies and

or protocols that pushed educators to identify disproportionality in student performance thereby

illuminating inconsistencies in educator practices and expectations. This data set would be coded

in the first round to depict CCDM and DM while also revealing a new code focused on

facilitation moves (FM).

We looked for patterns and trends in codes to explore connections between how school

and district leaders promote instructional and social justice leadership to cultivate educators'

SJPKS. Themes included disrupting deficit mindset, identifying forms of bias in curriculum,

generating counter-narratives and culturally responsive instruction.

In our third cycle, we synthesized our analysis based on the emerging codes from a priori

and in vivo coding. We applied the codes to specific strands of qualitative data by systematically

identifying and tagging relevant data. During this phase, codes were added, deleted, revised, or

broken into sub-groups or collapsed into one another based on the data's alignment to our

research questions.

Upon completion of coding, we explored and analyzed the data using frequency and

co-occurrence matrices to expose patterns, relationships, and frequencies between codes. Next,

we analyzed and triangulated across data sources to further determine trends and connections

which supported the individual researcher in gaining a comprehensive understanding of their

research. Additionally, the team collaborated and co-analyzed sources to search for overlapping

themes, trends, and connections that emerged.

We used two types of memos to support our analytic process (Birks et al., 2008). We employed individual analytic memos to record reflections, and additional coding processes (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In order to document our work, a memo codebook was created and used by all researchers to include notes, definitions, and rationale for each code. By utilizing multiple sources of data including qualitative interviews and document analysis, we corroborated and provide a more comprehensive and robust understanding of our findings.

Chapter Three[4]

A Superintendent's Development of Social Justice Pedagogical Knowledge and Skill

Statement of the Research Problem

The superintendency demands a multifaceted skill set that shifts over time (Hentschke et al., 2009). As the socio-political climate of public schools evolves, the responsibilities of the superintendency become more complex concerning large-scale, systemic educational reform (Björk et al., 2014). Unfortunately, reform efforts fail to disrupt the inequities that minoritized populations experience (Mavrogordato & White, 2020; Reister et al., 2002; Scanlan, 2006). Schools pursue social justice by striving to ensure educational equity for all identity groups, focusing on a fair distribution of resources, eliminating marginalization, raising the critical consciousness of staff and students, excelling in student achievement, and establishing inclusive practices and communities (Bell, 2007; McKenzie et al., 2008; Theoharis, 2007; Wang, 2012). Educational leaders at the district and school levels pursue equity by addressing these facets in hopes of dismantling systems of oppression.

Researchers assert that a crucial factor in developing socially just schools is "increased academic performance in districts with low and mixed levels of student achievement" (Whitt et al., 2015, p. 103). When a superintendent articulates a clear vision for instructional leadership, student achievement increases (Bredeson et al., 2011). Furthermore, having a clear understanding of what constitutes equity is critical. Singleton and Linton (2006) define equity as "raising the achievement of all students while narrowing the gaps between the highest and lowest performing

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[4] Marybeth O'Brien authored this chapter.

students and eliminating the racial predictability and disproportionality of which student groups occupy the highest and lowest achievement categories" (p. 46).

Implementing social justice requires specific knowledge, skills, and actions, which Dyches and Boyd (2017) establish as social justice pedagogical and content knowledge. Research on social justice pedagogical and content knowledge focuses on practitioners, educators, and teachers (Shulman, 1987; Mayne, 2019; Dyches & Boyd, 2017). However, limited research explores the superintendent's acquisition of the needed skills to demonstrate this knowledge through action (Dyches & Boyd). This study will explore how a superintendent understands the intersection of social justice pedagogical and content knowledge and the ability to take action and build capacity within the district by answering two central research questions:

1. How does a superintendent develop and understand their own social justice pedagogical knowledge and skill?

2. How does a superintendent enact their social justice pedagogical knowledge and skill to develop the capacity of district and school leaders?

Conceptual Framework

This individual study proposal is part of a more extensive study seeking to understand how school and district leaders cultivate and promote the social justice pedagogical knowledge and skills of others. Capper et al. (2006) provided a framework explaining the interconnected dimensions of social justice and instructional leadership. They argue that curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment must intersect with social justice knowledge, skills, and consciousness to develop leaders who can enact a vision of social justice in their school communities. I seek to apply a slice of this framework to understand how a superintendent develops their social justice

leadership and uses this knowledge to develop the capacity of school and district leaders to enact social justice pedagogical knowledge and practice as a lever for equity (Dyches & Boyd, 2017).

Capper et al.'s (2006) framework demonstrates the intersection of instructional and social justice leadership (see Figure 3.1). This lens defines equitable leadership at the intersection of the Instructional Frame and Social Justice Leadership Frame. Within the Venn diagram, the instructional components represent curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment, and the social justice leadership aspects are critical consciousness, knowledge, and skills.

Figure 3.1

Conceptual Framework for Social Justice Pedagogical Knowledge and Skill

Adapted from Capper et al. (2006) and Dyches & Boyd (2017)
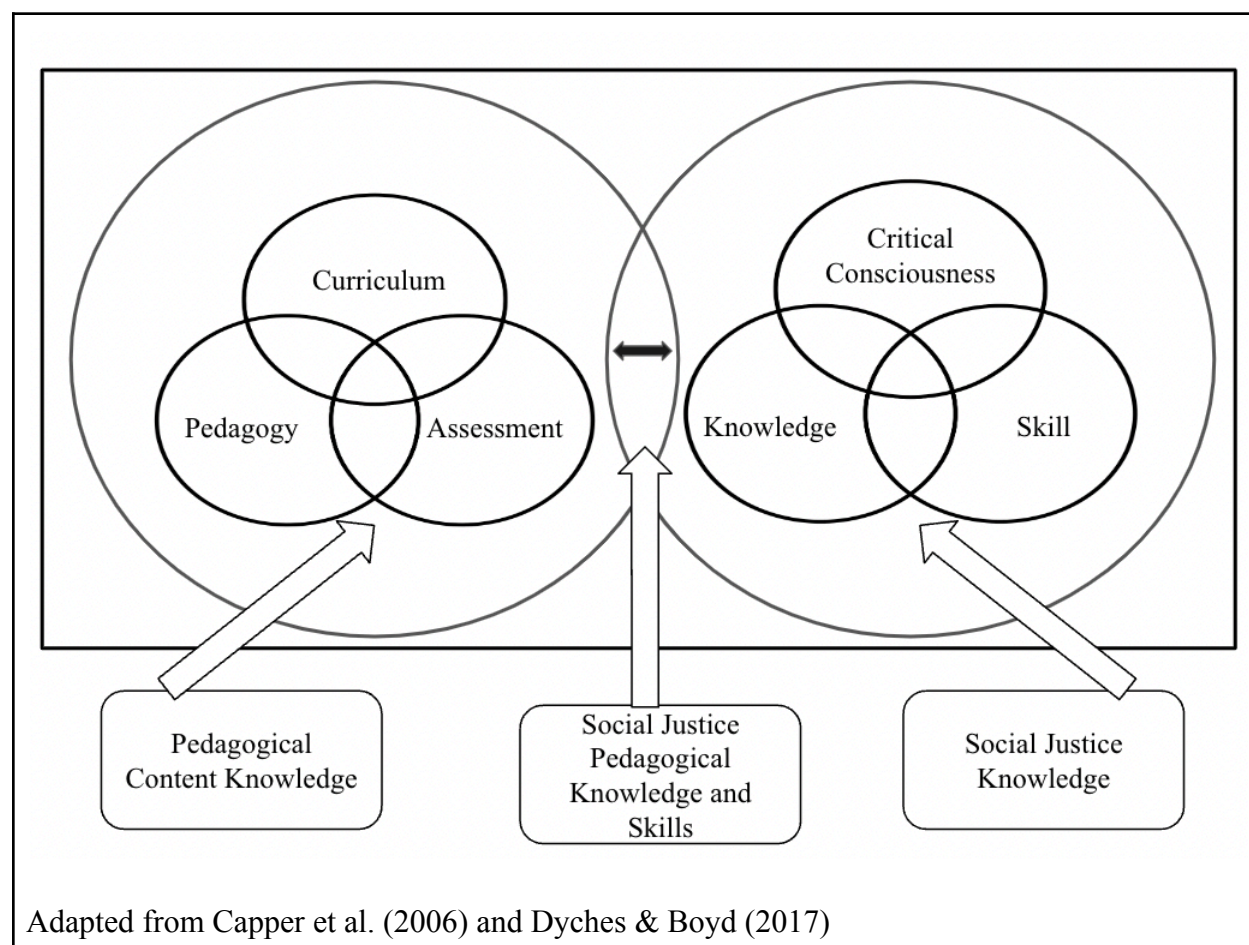
While Capper et al. (2006) applied a framework to leadership preparation programs, I adapted it to my study, considering how a superintendent develops and understands social justice pedagogical knowledge and skills. As referenced in Figure 3.1, the essential components depict the intersectionality of what leaders must believe, know, and do to lead socially just schools and districts. I focus more narrowly on how pedagogy is woven into social justice leadership practices. In examining how a superintendent understands, develops, and uses their knowledge and skill as a social justice leader, pedagogy served as a throughline across the dimensions of critical consciousness, knowledge, and skills (see Figure 3.2).

Figure 3.2

Intersection of Pedagogical Influence on Social Justice Leadership Framework

Social Justice Leadership

Skills

Knowledge

Critical
Consciousness

Pedagogy
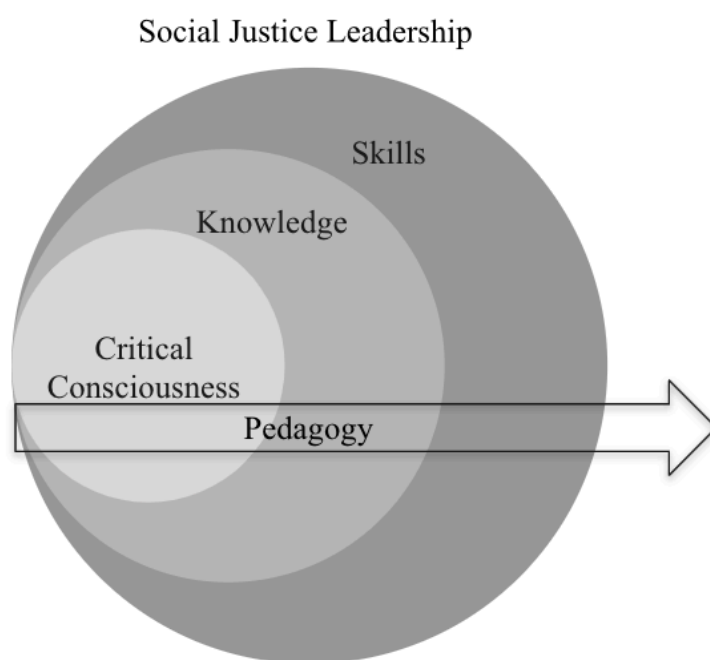
(adapted from Capper et al., 2006)

Leaders must possess the knowledge and skills to enact socially just practices which are

illuminated through several research studies. Accordingly, Dyches and Boyd's (2017) framework asserts that by understanding systems of oppression, privilege, and domination, educators lay a strong groundwork for social justice pedagogical and content knowledge. This understanding empowers educators to make knowledgeable choices, prioritizing social justice principles in their teaching and curriculum. To enact substantial transformation, practitioners must actively employ their social justice knowledge as catalysts for change, working to dismantle oppressive systems. Without translating this knowledge into action, individuals may acknowledge the existence of oppression but struggle to confront and dismantle these entrenched systems effectively.

In alignment with my research questions, I examined the social justice pedagogical practices used by the superintendent to develop his or her own critical consciousness, social justice knowledge, and skills as well as those of district and school leaders. For the purpose of this study, social justice pedagogical practices are defined as the specific instructional methods used by a leader that encourages others to challenge and transform: unequal power relationships (critical consciousness), inequitable policies (social justice knowledge), and bias-based practices (social justice skills), thereby limiting the opportunities and potential of others. Examining a superintendent's pedagogy offers an opportunity to understand how a superintendent's critical consciousness, knowledge, and skills influence their leadership practice and, in turn, school and district-based leadership.

Literature Review

To situate the investigation's importance of the superintendent's development of instructional and social justice leadership as a lever for developing the capacity of school and district leadership, I reviewed three bodies of literature. First, I examine scholarly research on the

superintendent's role in leading a school district. Next, I review social justice leadership literature. Third, I consider the scholarly research related to the meaning of pedagogical content knowledge in relation to instructional and social justice leadership.

Role of Superintendent

The role of the superintendent has evolved since its creation in the mid-1800s. Kowalski and Björk (2005) categorized the roles as they matured over time, beginning in 1850. First, evolving from the labels of teacher-scholar to an organizational manager, then democratic leader, applied social scientist, and finally, communicator. As the nature and demands of schooling evolved and the purpose was redefined, the roles and responsibilities of the superintendency became increasingly complex and largely influenced by shifts in the social, economic, political, and technological landscapes (Bjork et al., 2014). Furthermore, Byrd et al. (2006) assert that training and preparation programs must do more to prepare superintendents for such complexities.

Consequently, scholars have emphasized the need for school leaders, specifically superintendents, to lead through a social justice lens. For example, Tichnor-Wagner's (2019) studied two North Carolina superintendents' implementation of an instructional reform named global education. This reform effort teaches global competence, "emphasizing both social-emotional learning and academic rigor" (p.496). In this exploratory, comparative study of two district leaders, researchers sought to determine what specific approaches were deployed to support the implementation of this reform effort that led to its success. While the two districts took on different leadership approaches (top-down vs. top-and-bottom), the core strategies central to their efforts were strategically generating will, building capacity through professional

development and supervision, and re-orienting the organization. As a result, the implementation of a new instructional reform was effective and took root in both districts. Strategies used by these superintendents could be an example of superintendents leading for social justice.

Leadership for Social Justice

Importantly, social justice requires an interest in recognizing and eliminating systemic barriers preventing individuals and groups from accessing basic human rights and living dignified lives. However, definitions of social justice in education are contested and have developed over time. In this study, social justice will be used in relation to advancing educational equity. To understand this concept, my second strand of literature examines social justice leadership and its need to be action-oriented, focused on identifying and eliminating unjust practices and substituting them with more equitable, culturally suitable ones (Furman, 2012). Therefore, school leaders must recognize inequality and possess the characteristics necessary to consistently expose systemic inequities (DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014).

As a result, scholars have identified several key characteristics of social justice leaders (Boyles et al., 2009; Dantley & Tillman, 2010; Larson & Murtada, 2003; Theoharis & Scanlan, 2021). These include:

- a commitment to equity and fairness in education;
- an understanding of how social identities and systemic oppression intersect in the educational setting;
- a focus on creating inclusive and culturally responsive learning environments;
- a willingness to engage in difficult conversations and address uncomfortable

truths;

- a commitment to continuous learning, reflection, and development

Importantly, this research demonstrates that leaders for social justice develop the skills, knowledge, and practices to exemplify such characteristics. For instance, Shields (2017) conducted a purposeful study of six district leaders who appeared to maintain their focus on social justice, equity, and inclusion issues. One finding was that social justice leaders prioritized framing what social justice looked like in action. Furthermore, there was evidence of hands-on leadership, developing positive relationships, and creating equitable and inclusive student environments (Shields, 2017). This notion builds on Kumashiro's (2010) assertion that social justice leadership involves creating a school culture that promotes equity, inclusivity, and diversity.

Additionally, there is not a single correct model for social justice leadership (Bogotch, 2002). Rather, these efforts "must be deliberately and continuously reinvented and critiqued" (Furman, 2012, p. 154). Furthermore, while there are numerous approaches to engaging social justice leadership in schools, Capper et al. (2006) define it as what leaders must believe, know, and do to lead socially just institutions. In addition, Scanlan and Theoharis (2021) note four outcomes that result from such leadership: raising student achievement, improving school structures, re-centering and enhancing staff capacity, and strengthening school culture and community.

Educational leadership for social justice requires preparation. As Pounder, Reitzug, and Young (2002) assert, such preparation involves developing the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to understand social justice and its implications for schooling. Some of these

skills identify, challenge, and counteract discrimination and prejudice; foster a culture of high expectations for all children and faculty; facilitate the development of a rigorous, multicultural, and inclusive curriculum; develop the capacity of others; and sustain a commitment to equity in an inclusive learning community. The preparation of school and district leaders should include foci, pedagogical content knowledge (PCK), and its intersection with social justice leadership knowledge.

Pedagogical Content Knowledge

To apply the theories of pedagogical content and knowledge to the superintendent in the context of social justice leadership, defining pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) is needed. PCK is an educational concept that refers to the understanding of both the subject matter (content knowledge) and the best practices for conveying that content to learners (pedagogical knowledge) (Shulman, 1987). PCK is developed through experience, reflection, professional development, and ongoing collaboration with colleagues (Capper et al, 2006). Research has demonstrated that social justice pedagogical knowledge includes strategies that raise awareness of societal issues and set goals to enact just change through applying culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy (Mayne, 2019). Culturally relevant pedagogy proposes three fundamental goals: all students must experience academic success; students must develop and maintain cultural competence; and students must develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the current social order (Ladson-Billings, 1995) Dyches and Boyd (2017) recognized the absence of equity-based instruction that existed in Shulman's (1987) seminal work and further model asserting that "social justice knowledge permeates and shapes all PCK practices" (p. 477).

Dyches & Boyds' (2017) framework posits that educators' pedagogical knowledge is inseparable from their orientation to social justice, regardless of the content they teach (see Figure 3.3). The authors postulate that teacher education programs should include coursework and field experiences that help future teachers develop a deep understanding of social justice issues and strategies in their teaching practices.

Dyches and Boyd (2017) assert that at all levels of PCK, the decisions made by teachers have an associative effect, either actively working towards promoting an inclusive, equitable environment or, under the pretense of neutrality, fortifying the status quo of hegemony. They assert that social justice and instruction are intricately intersected (see Figure 3.3).

Figure 3.3

Dyches and Boyd's model of social justice pedagogical content and knowledge framework

Social Justice Knowledge			
Discourses	Theory	History	Agency
Social Justice Pedagogical Knowledge		**Social Justice Knowledge**	
Culturally Accessing Pedagogies Critical Pedagogies Agency-Inticing Pedagogies		Traditional Content Knowledge Critical Content Knowledge	

(Dyches & Boyd, 2017, p. 479)

Figure 3.3 above demonstrates elements of Social Justice Leadership illustrating the tenets of knowledge through pedagogy. When intersected, the constructs of critical consciousness and social justice knowledge and skill can result in district and school practices that build toward socially just school districts. Dyches and Boyd (2017) assert that "Social Justice Knowledge

should involve both an individual awareness and a schema for contributing to a more just society" (p. 482). Further, they illustrate the inextricable facets of critical consciousness and reflection as necessary tenets of agency within social justice knowledge. Within the domain of Social Justice Pedagogical Knowledge, Dyches and Boyd put forth three tenets: culturally accessing pedagogies which involve strategies that integrate, respect, and honor students' culture and use it as a vehicle for culturally responsive teaching; critical pedagogies, which are defined as employing critical consciousness and strategies to engage students to become critical of the world around them; and agency-inticing pedagogies which entails the use of pedagogies to effect transformation and move one towards action. This is essentially where learning and action take place. These definitions are used to support my adapted framework for SJPKS (see Figure 3.2).

Critical Consciousness

Social justice leadership involves recognizing and acknowledging how social identities (such as race, gender, class, ability, etc.) intersect and shape individuals' experiences and opportunities within the educational system. Social justice leadership also involves actively dismantling oppressive structures and systems and creating inclusive and culturally responsive learning environments that empower all students to succeed. Critical consciousness, as outlined in Chapter One, reflects Freire's (1970) assertion that pedagogy is a practice with political and moral implications that enables students to acquire the knowledge, skills, and social connections essential for exploring the idea of being a critical member of society (see Figure 3.1).

Clearly, for "educational leaders to enact change in schools that can lead to greater social justice, an understanding of oppression and self-awareness can provide the foundation for advocacy and activism on the part of those who are oppressed" (Vogel, 2011, p. 79). With this in

mind, it should be noted that knowledge must be coupled with skill. Therefore an examination of the literature connecting knowledge and skill is warranted (see Figure 3.1).

Social Justice Knowledge and Skill

While social justice leadership in education is seen by many as a critical approach, it has its challenges and criticisms. One criticism is that social justice leadership can be difficult to understand in theory and, consequently, in practice. (Theoharis & Brooks, 2018). Others have argued that social justice leadership can be overly focused on individual actions and attitudes rather than addressing significant systemic issues contributing to educational inequality (Lopez, 2016). The knowledge gaps leaders sometimes have must be addressed through explicit education that supports their learning.

One way to address a knowledge gap is by understanding and using culturally responsive pedagogy. This approach involves tailoring teaching practices to students' cultural backgrounds and experiences (Ladson-Billings, 1995). This strategy allows leaders to build trust and promote a sense of belonging in schools (Bogotch & Shields, 2005).

Possessing the knowledge necessary to lead for social justice is not enough. Leaders must have the skill set to transfer knowledge into practice. Take, for instance, a case study conducted by Scanlan (2006) of a Catholic school leader oriented toward social justice. However, even with this leader's critical consciousness and knowledge, their actions perpetuate inequities, exclusion, and marginalization of English Learners and students with disabilities. This finding points to the need to build upon the knowledge base of the most socially-just leaders.

Moreover, Reister et al. (2002) conducted a case study of six principals leading high-poverty, high-achieving schools who demonstrated the knowledge and skill set of social

justice leadership. Researchers found the following shared beliefs among participants:

"First, all students have a right to and receive a high quality, effective education. Second, all students and teachers are regarded and respected as individuals. Third, everyone has a fair chance to develop strong literacy skills that will serve as the tools of active citizenship in a democratic society. Fourth, when inequities remain (as in the case of low-performing or special education students), they are favored with the most intensive support and assistance available" (Reister et al., 2002, p. 302).

Further, their study yielded that all six principals exercised similar leadership strategies, including vision setting, data-driven instruction, empowerment of teachers to problematize learning challenges, collaborative professional learning, and planning.

In summary, these three bodies of literature examining social justice, leadership, and pedagogical knowledge situate this study, which examined how a superintendent develops their social justice and pedagogical knowledge and, in turn, attempted to develop the same capacity in school and district leaders.

Methodology

I conducted a case study (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This was an appropriate approach because case studies "concentrate attention on the way particular groups of people confront specific problems, taking a holistic view of the situation" (Shaw, 1978, p. 2).

Data Collection

As noted in Chapter 2, our team used purposeful sampling to identify a mid- to large-sized urban district representing a diverse student population with achievement gaps among subgroups (Maxwell, 2005; Seidman, 2006; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). For the purpose of this

individual study, the superintendent had a minimum of three years of leadership experience at the superintendent level and met the criteria listed in Appendix E. These criteria were important since, when engaged in a case study approach, the researcher "begins with cases already identified… that are of prominent interest before the formal study begins" (Stake, 2005, p. 151).

In qualitative research, interviews and observations are the primary data collection tools (Meriam & Tisdell, 2016). I drew upon two forms of data: interviews and archival documents.

Interviews

I used qualitative, semi-structured interviews to explore and understand participants' perspectives and practices consistent with the stated research questions. I interviewed the superintendent, five district leaders, and three principals individually. A semi-structured protocol with questions to address both research questions served as the method for data collection (see Appendices A, B, and C). As stated in Chapter 2, interview questions were field tested through pilot interviews to streamline and edit questions, verbiage, and sequence to ensure they elicit responses aligned with research questions. Interviews were recorded and transcribed using the Otter Software. The purpose of a semi-structured protocol is to provide an opportunity to ask follow-up questions (Weiss, 1995). Seidman (2006) asserts that the context of participants' experiences and perspectives lends itself to a data set. In this case study, it is necessary to investigate and uncover the participants' definitions of social justice and anecdotal experience in developing their knowledge and skills in social justice leadership.

The interview questions were intended to provide context and insight into the possible programs, formal or informal groups, experiences, and individuals that the study superintendent understood to have shaped their social justice leadership. I interviewed the superintendent to

learn how they defined social justice leadership and how they acquired the knowledge and skills necessary to enact it. Alongside the superintendent, I interviewed five district leadership team members and three principals at the primary and secondary levels to understand the impact of the superintendents' actions on the individuals they directly supervise, specific to their social justice pedagogical knowledge and skill to develop others. Additionally, interviewing leaders across the organization served as a method of data triangulation to support the investigation into the specific actions and activities utilized by the superintendent to build the skills and knowledge of district leaders and principals, increasing reliability.

Documentation

A second source of data collected was documentation. This documentation provided evidence confirming and disconfirming what I learned in interviews as well as provided additional insights (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Additionally, the document review offered "an unobtrusive technique that allows researchers to analyze relatively unstructured data because of the meanings, symbolic qualities, and expressive contents" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p. 179). Finally, Merriam and Tisdell (2015) assert that "the researcher must keep an open mind when it comes to discovering useful documents. Being open to any possibility can lead to serendipitous discoveries" (p. 175).

The document review provided insights related to both of my research questions. Documents included the district strategic plan, school improvement plans, district prioritization submissions, superintendent communication to various stakeholder groups, agendas, professional development plans and resources, news articles, and other public documents relevant to this study (see Appendix D). For example, in the district strategic plan, I looked for evidence of a

focus on culturally and linguistically sustaining practices, curriculum audits with a lens for bias, and/or data-driven practices focused on disrupting disproportionality. Furthermore, I investigated documents for coherence between these district initiatives and school-based improvement plans. During interviews, I listened for references to documentation.

Data Analysis

Since data collection and analysis frequently occur concurrently, the analysis process was iterative (Merriam & Tidell, 2015). My analysis involved organizing and making sense of data through coding. Coding is an interpretive act that summarizes or condenses data, which "generates the bones of your analysis, and integration will assemble those bones into a working skeleton" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 45). A code "is a word or short phrase representing a salient or essence-capturing portion of data" (Saldana, 2015, p. 3).

I engaged in multiple coding cycles. First, I categorized data using a deductive approach to develop a coding framework aligning my research questions, conceptual framework, and interview protocols. The first round of a priori coding sorted the data as it relates to each research question: first, the superintendent's development, and second, the development of the leadership capacity of others. During the second round of coding, I used deductive codes as they related to my conceptual framework. These codes included the three dimensions of social justice leadership (SJL): critical consciousness (CC), knowledge (SJK), and skill (SJS), while also examining pedagogy (PK) as a throughline (see Appendix A). During the third round of coding, I used an inductive approach to develop new codes that represented new themes that emerged in the data. The themes that emerged related to research question one were critical self-reflection, political agency, and critical action. The themes related to research question two were vision and

priority setting, fostering vulnerability and self-reflection, strategic professional development, and community empowerment.

I used the data analysis and coding software Dedoose to help me organize my codes. Dedoose software supported the tagging, highlighting, selecting, and coding of text. Furthermore, Dedoose was used to determine code frequency and co-occurrence matrices, which provided insights into the prevalence and relationships between codes. Additionally, I used the tools within Dedoose to triangulate data and themes prevalent across sources to gain insight into emerging patterns.

Findings

I now present my findings regarding a superintendent's understanding of the intersection of social justice pedagogical knowledge and skill (SJPKS) and their ability to act and build the capacity of administrators within the district. I divide my findings into four sections. In the first two sections, I address my first research question by showing that the superintendent's understanding of SJPKS (a) primarily involves critical consciousness and (b) is a developmental process. In my third section, I address the findings of the second research question focused on the superintendent's enactment of SJPKS to develop the capacity of district and school leaders. Four themes emerged: setting vision, fostering vulnerability and self-reflection by modeling critical consciousness, advancing professional development, and promoting community empowerment.

Critical Consciousness

The evidence revealed that the primary method by which Superintendent Meyers grasps social justice pedagogical knowledge and skill is through the development and understanding of

critical consciousness. Three key tenets of critical consciousness essential to social justice leadership are critical self-reflection, political agency, and critical action.

Critical Self-Reflection

The prominent theme throughout the study of Superintendent Meyers was his ability to critically self-reflect. He consistently demonstrated thoughtful reflection on how power, privilege, race, and assumptions influenced his lived experiences. In response to the questions about understanding social justice leadership, Superintendent Meyers actively reflected on how his lived experiences shaped his understanding of social, political, and economic influences on the academic system. One dimension of this was his awareness of his own positionality. For instance, he expressed an awareness of certain privileges afforded him by his racial identity as White: "I'm always very mindful that I had a lot of opportunities because of my skin color, because of my affiliations, because of my relationships." He further recognized that while he faced considerable challenges in navigating both the social and educational landscapes, he also acknowledged that he had privilege, "I know there is a level of privilege that came with that. Just based on my skin. I know the level of privilege that it provided me being a Catholic and being part of the church."

When prompted to consider further the formation of his identity and how his life experiences contributed to and guided his approach to leadership, he shared a poignant narrative, delving into the journey of his parents and siblings immigration experience to the United States: "Even though my parents were immigrants and millworkers, we were the working poor or working class, there is a level of privilege that came with that." As a result of recognizing this

level of privilege, he stated, "People in the room may not have been blessed and fortunate to experience what I have. I always try to carry that lens."

According to Superintendent Meyers, leading for social justice is the need, willingness, and commitment to improve the lived experiences of others. The superintendent reflected that while some of his lived experiences may have presented challenges, he was given opportunities to overcome these. While Superintendent Meyers acknowledged his family's hardships, he highlighted the pivotal role of influential community members who served as mentors. Thus, another dimension of his critical self-reflection was the influence of leadership role models. These models, including teachers, coaches, and figures from the Catholic Church, provided essential guidance and support and served as exemplary leadership. They shaped his experiences, underscoring their lasting impact. Superintendent Meyers attributed his successful navigation through the educational system, opportunities for leadership, and access and admission to college to the unwavering support of these "strong models," for which he wants to "apply the wisdom he gained from past mentors to help students across the district." He was grateful for the influence of these relationships, describing himself as having been "blessed to receive so much."

A third dimension of Superintendent Meyers's critical self-reflection was his identification as a "servant leader." In making meaning from his lived experience, he expressed awareness of the experiences of those underserved and a desire to extend opportunities beyond what he received. Subsequently, reflecting on his privilege, both through these mentors and his current role as superintendent, he describes "what fuels" him and "his drive" to further advocate for enhanced access and opportunities for all students:

I want to make sure every student who had a similar background to mine or worse than mine or was deemed to have privileges that my parents couldn't provide me with, I want to make sure they have access and opportunity to all the stuff they know that I didn't have access to. So they can take advantage of all we have to offer, with whatever support they need that we can provide. So that they can care for themselves, be able to care for their family, be able to provide for their family and give their kids everything that their parents couldn't give them.

Beyond his personal reflections, other data also reflected Superintendent Meyers's critical self-reflection, reinforcing these three dimensions. For instance, in a news article announcing the Superintendent's appointment, he cited the privileged mentoring he experienced and expressed pride in growing up Portuguese. These influences guided him toward becoming an educator: "If I didn't have that opportunity, I probably would have been at the fabric company, where my father had a job lined up for me after high school." As another example, a district-level leader described Superintendent Meyers as being "very proud of his heritage and culture" and went further in stating:

And he often uses that as an example that, you know, he was an immigrant here and himself and some of the challenges he faced in the biases he faced as a young person, you know, growing up in a new country to him, right? So, I believe, just personally, he's very sensitive about that.

These examples illustrate the superintendent's development of critical consciousness, specifically critical self-reflection and a desire to act.

Conversely, a need for ongoing self-reflection emerged. For example, a school leader described a workshop led by consultants, which in part focused on the "n-word." This leader explained that a key takeaway validated their reaction to an incident in which this word was used by a 5th-grade White female student. This principal considered all factors and decided a restorative approach would best meet the needs of all impacted parties. When district leaders, including the superintendent, learned of this action, they did not favor the restorative approach and demanded the decision be a more punitive one - a suspension. The leader noted, "Only one district administrator put the pieces together and learned from it and apologized." Therefore, the development of SJPKS and its actions appear not to be solely encapsulated in one person. Even though this is the work the Superintendent is doing, all members of the leadership team need opportunities to reflect and self-reflect. This clearly shows critical self-reflection is a real need for all leaders.

The three dimensions of positionality, influence of role models, and style of servant leadership were components of Superintendent Meyers's practice of critical self-reflection. Superintendent Meyers demonstrated how his lived experiences and models shaped his place in the world and further used this experience as a motivator toward leadership.

Political Agency and Critical Action

Alongside critical self-reflection, Superintendent Meyers demonstrated his understanding of SJPKS through two other elements of critical consciousness: political agency and critical action. Political agency and critical action, integral to critical consciousness, involve empowering individuals to actively shape and challenge political systems for social equity by purposefully engaging in transformative activities to dismantle oppression and advocate for

justice. The data showed Superintendent Meyers understood SJPKS as applied. Knowledge is not enough; one must also possess the skill and will to engage in action to disrupt inequities.

Superintendent Meyers noted several actions that demonstrated the intersection of knowledge and skill in addressing inequities and promoting diversity and inclusion in the district and schools. One example was advocacy for students to access vocational-technical schools. This advocacy illustrates political agency and critical action. The district's strategic plan outlined Superintendent Meyers's direct engagement in advocating for fair and equitable practices regarding admission criteria for student enrollment in vocational and technical education opportunities. He also described voicing these views publicly: "I think I testified twice on Beacon Hill." Superintendent Meyers argued that students with higher academic scores were prioritized over those who might benefit more from a vocational track, limiting access to vocational-technical opportunities for students in the county.

As another aspect of this political agency and critical action, Superintendent Meyers discussed his commitment beyond his district to support the county and neighboring communities. He attributes his passion for this topic to his time as a Middle School principal, "We graduated 260 kids on average from the Middle School. And about 25% of those kids were accepted to the vocational school… less than a percent would have an IEP." Superintendent Meyers advocated that disparities exist in the representation of students with special needs, ethnic groups, and income levels between vocational and traditional high schools. "I would do this analysis every year, and it used to drive me crazy." As superintendent, he continued to analyze disparities and advocate for change. "And then, as I continued doing more research in this role, I did an analysis comparing the vocational school to the high school. It was alarming

when you look at the differentials." Highlighting the enrollment gaps between neighboring high schools compared to vocational institutions, alongside their respective performance metrics, Superintendent Meyers underscored these disparities and recognized the urgent need for action. He emphasized the pivotal role of equity, particularly for eighth-graders making decisions about their future high school. Thereby, he established a direct link between leadership for social justice, political agency, and taking proactive actions: "So my advocacy has been around now providing a level playing field for our kids who you're asking an eighth grader to make a decision that is going to impact the rest of their life." This quote illustrates Superintendent Meyers's dedication to ensuring that all students have equal opportunities to pursue their preferred educational and career paths regardless of academic performance or background.

In another example of political agency and critical action, Superintendent Meyers actively sought to provide students with access and opportunities. One specific way he did this was by removing financial barriers, such as academic fees and transportation costs, to ensure all students can fully engage in extracurricular and academic activities. A district leader explained how the superintendent provided this access, "We saw a lot of kids wanting to be after school to do a club, but they couldn't because they didn't have after-school transportation. So we [funded] late buses for our middle schools." Another way he provided access and opportunities was in athletics. He explained, "We're bringing extracurricular sports into our middle schools, so all our kids can participate." Yet another way was with music: "We provide loaner instruments for the band program. So kids who want to be part of the band program that can't afford it can play."

Superintendent Meyers's reflections show how he saw these efforts as advancing a broader mission of providing students with a "sense of belonging when they get to that high

school, and continue that connectivity piece." In addition, uniforms are provided, "even if it's just a t-shirt, so our kids feel that they are a part of a team." The Superintendent's own experience inspired these efforts. For instance, he shared a personal experience of being unable to afford an instrument for the band program, shaping his commitment to providing resources for students in similar situations, stating, "This was something that I experienced as a kid. My family couldn't afford to rent an instrument, so I didn't get to play the trumpet." Again guided by his own lived experience, he works to establish equitable practices for students "So kids can participate and have access to what they need."

Another example of Superintendent Meyers's understanding of political agency and critical action involved the knowledge of how social, political, and economic spheres influence educational experiences. Marked by heightened scrutiny of social justice, race, and diversity education in schools, Superintendent Meyers described how he used his knowledge and understanding of these tenets to navigate the complex socio-political landscape, particularly during the recent election period. For example, when faced with inquiries about these topics, whether from school board members or individuals running for school committee positions, Superintendent Meyers demonstrated critical action through consistent messaging, stating:

> Every time I get 'that' question [referencing critical race theory], whether it's from one of my school board members or somebody running for school committee, which the people running did ask, I respond by saying, "We don't teach critical race theory in schools."

Superintendent Meyers went on to explain that he actively educates people, clarifying that Critical Race Theory is a graduate-level course with prerequisites, making it unsuitable for school curricula. Emphasizing the distinction, the Superintendent reinforces that critical race

theory is not part of their educational framework. Additionally, when addressing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI), the Superintendent constantly reminds individuals and the public of the district's commitment to these principles, "I always remind people, and I remind them publicly." Through this consistent communication, the superintendent affirms the vision and priorities for leadership within the district.

In another illustration of political agency and critical action demonstrated by Superintendent Meyers was making difficult decisions, particularly those that were not popular. In this example, Superintendent Meyers described an incident in which "the principal, the assistant principal, and the nurse completely mismanaged a situation." This incident "involved a group of students at recess where a student's neck was injured by a jump rope. A mixed group of students, Black, Hispanic, and White were playing and doing everything but jumping rope," leading to "an injury to the Black child." As a result of not contacting the family, and then more than a week passing before the incident was addressed, the incident, which Superintendent Meyers states "wasn't race driven," became a "nasty situation," receiving media attention and "threats from all over the country." Superintendent Meyers investigated the situation and hired an independent investigator. In turn, this led to a "complete breakdown of trust" between the family and the school. He further shared that this incident impacted the entire district. As a result, he felt he had to suspend the principal and assistant principal for their lack of action; they "didn't realize the sensitivity around this and what this could become." He further explained, "It was one of the worst situations I've dealt with," and noted, "We've had horrible incidents since I've been superintendent involving race, and I feel a lot of it could've been prevented if people just had a little more awareness and a few more tools in their tool belt."

The aftermath prompted a reactive response to engage administrators and school nurses in participation in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) training. Despite engaging the district leaders in DEI training before this incident, it was apparent to Superintendent Meyers that developing the SJPKS is a developmental process and requires ongoing training and support. The lack of awareness exhibited by the school leaders on the socio-political impact of this incident led to mistrust and a lack of urgency to support the child and the restorative approach needed to address the issue at hand. Superintendent Meyers was charged with addressing the behavior of the leaders as well as managing the socio-political climate to restore trust with the family and the community as well as formalizing protocols, and engaging leaders in learning about the complexity of this and future issues. Thus, Superintendent Meyers employed the levers of political agency and critical action in reaction to this situation.

Social Justice Pedagogical Knowledge and Skill as a Developmental Process

Alongside critical consciousness, another way this superintendent understood social justice pedagogical knowledge and skill was as a developmental process. Social justice leadership involves the ongoing reflection, questioning, and analysis of the social, political, and economic factors influencing the educational landscape. The data showed the superintendent's development and understanding of social justice knowledge and skill as iterative. For instance, Superintendent Meyers's biography states:

> As Superintendent, I recognize that changing personal habits and attitudes takes time, but I am personally and professionally committed to ensuring that the district not only reports and writes that we are equitable but that we are, in fact, actively and dynamically

practicing our commitment to cultivating social just climates and our socially just

practices that are in the interest of our staff, students and families.

One message this declaration conveyed was the superintendent's espoused commitment

to applying what is said, and written, and promised to actualize socially just practices in action.

Illustrations showcasing this commitment to advancing SJPKS were the workshops,

partnerships with professional organizations, and consultancies. These initiatives point to

Superintendent Meyers's developmental process of enhancing his knowledge and capacity in

social justice. For instance, Superintendent Meyers engaged district leaders in a full-day

professional development workshop a few years ago, delivered by the Anti-Defamation League

(ADL), which "provided a baseline with a foundation on social justice" for all members of the

organization. When asked about the impact of this professional workshop on his development as

a social justice leader, Superintendent Meyers described how he takes activities he learned in this

workshop and uses them in his leadership meetings with principals and district leaders. The

superintendent shared several leadership agendas, a DEI planning guide, and DEI Monthly

Planner and Activity Guide that he further explained serves as the blueprint for this work.

Evidence from others corroborated that Superintendent Meyers understood SJPKS as a

developmental process. For instance, a school-level leader remarked that despite engaging in the

same workshops, she and her colleagues are in various stages of their journeys to develop

SJPKS. She presented a growth-orientation to engaging in dialogue around identity, diversity,

and equity, "Encouraging discomfort is part of the growth process. It's about being a little

uncomfortable, not in pain - that's where the real thinking happens." She also reflected that this

developmental process involved wrestling with one's own identity and beliefs while attempting

to enact practice to reshape the educational experience: "When principals adopt new approaches, the district initially supports it but tends to micromanage to ensure everyone is operating similarly." In reflecting on the intent of Superintendent Meyers and team to establish coherence among the school she highlights the fact that in doing this, it often creates limitations to the work or presents barriers to enacting change that challenges the status quo. Consequently, this underscores Superintendent Meyers's recognition that cultivating SJPKS is developmental and entails personal growth. Implementing SJPKS demands ongoing reflection on its enactment and communication to discern its effects on individuals and the system.

In summary, the data in these first two sections show how Superintendent Meyers demonstrated and understood social justice pedagogical knowledge and skill through critical consciousness, which is inextricably tied to knowledge and skill. Engaging in critical self-reflection led to this superintendent's commitment and will to engage in political agency and critical action to shape the educational, financial, and environmental landscape of the district.

Superintendent Enactment of SJPKS to Develop the Capacity of District and School Leaders

To answer the second research question I examined the superintendent's ability to enact their SJPKS to develop the capacity of district and school leaders. Four themes emerged: setting vision, fostering vulnerability and self-reflection by modeling critical consciousness, advancing professional development, and promoting community empowerment.

Setting Vision

Data show that the first way that the superintendent implemented SJPKS to enhance the capacity of district and school leaders was by articulating a compelling vision. This vision

inspired and motivated others toward a shared objective while also providing direction and focus for the organization. The vision communicated the superintendent's authentic commitment to social justice, equity, and fostering positive change. Some evidence of this vision is from documentation indicating that the superintendent set clear priorities to disrupt existing systems. For instance, the District Strategic Plan (2021) identified three focus initiatives: "Initiative #1: Vocational and Technical Education; Initiative #2: The Aspiring Administrators' Pipeline; and Initiative #3: Social Justice." Each of these initiatives highlights particular actions taken by Superintendent Meyers to advocate for equitable opportunities for students by enhancing the professional development of staff. For example, the intentionality around "Social Justice" as articulated in the district strategic plan and on a document named "Social Justice Planning Guide" outlined a series of professional development programs throughout the 2020-21 school year and focused on building their "knowledge, tools, and resources to address matters of explicit and implicit bias, prejudice and discrimination, and promote an inclusive learning environment in which racial, cultural, and other human differences are respected and valued." This goal statement emphasizes the commitment to developing the SJPKS capacity of district educators.

Other evidence of the impact of the superintendent's vision setting came from interviews with district leaders. For instance, one administrative colleague remarked, "A superintendent should be able to recognize that this work is important… I believe our superintendent thinks that. Our superintendent, being that leader, provides professional development and the curriculum needed to educate our staff and our students." This leader further noted that it is the work of the entire district leadership team and the principals that carry out the commitment to social justice leadership. "With the superintendent guiding us, we provide the professional development or the

tools needed. And we present those in our principals meetings and also in our AP meetings."

Similarly, she reflected that this approach to setting a vision is taking effect at the building level:

> It does trickle down to the building level. And then the superintendent touches base with all our building leaders to ensure that the work that he and all of us are supporting is being delivered in each of our buildings.

> Similarly, leaders at the school level confirm that the superintendent's deliberate actions to develop their capacity at the school level reinforce the vision, prioritizing a commitment to social justice.

In summary, due to Superintendent Meyers's clear vision and priority setting, district and school leaders were well-aware of the commitment to social justice and the intention to enhance their skills as leaders of social justice.

Fostering Vulnerability and Self-Reflection by Modeling Critical Consciousness

A second theme that emerged regarding how the superintendent enacted their SJPKS to develop the capacity of district and school leaders involved vulnerability and self-reflection. A leader's willingness to be vulnerable and to engage in self-reflection appears to significantly influence how others respond to their leadership. The district and school leaders report that Superintendent Meyers's willingness to openly share how his lived experiences impacted his leadership was influential to their own development of critical consciousness. Throughout interviews with district and school leaders, they demonstrated a willingness to share the construction of their identities and the impact on their leadership attributing this vulnerability and self-reflection to the way it is also exhibited by Superintendent Meyers. For example, one school leader shared her experience coming from an immigrant family and experiences with bias.

Despite being at the top of her class, her guidance counselor discouraged her from applying to Ivy League schools due to the family status as "immigrant." Almost 30 years later, this leader continues to reflect on her early experiences of assimilation, being told to Americanize her first name, both in school and later as an adult and strives to ensure her students have pathways and agency to have better experiences.

Similarly, another school-level leader articulated a connection between understanding their identity and its influence on their leadership. Specifically, this person identified Superintendent Meyers's encouragement and modeling of his own leadership identity as giving them the confidence to do the same. Accordingly, this leader felt open to sharing their sexuality and the experience of navigating educational systems with a child with disabilities in a vulnerable way. Furthermore, the leader was able to translate the connection to their leadership style and the understanding of the need to build capacity of all staff to ensure everyone feels empowered to bring their identity to their work.

Still another district leader connected experiences as a child of immigrant parents to Superintendent Meyers. This leader discussed experiences as a multilingual learner in the school district, for which they are now a district-level leader: Ultimately, the leader stated that the challenges have not changed much, sharing, "We're hardly anywhere near where we should be, 40 years later." Noting the comparative experiences of students today to her own, and the urgency for advocating for and enacting change the system "elevating the priorities for multilingual learners." The leader drew a clear line to the superintendent, sharing his commitment to disrupting the inequities that drives her work, "the superintendent is extremely supportive of my vision, the projects I do, and my initiatives." Throughout each of the

interviews, district leaders were able to provide clear examples of how Superintendent Meyers's willingness to express vulnerability, connect work to identity, and provide ongoing modeling of this commitment has, in turn, nurtured those traits in leaders. These leaders pointed to Superintendent Meyers creating the time and space for leaders to reflect on these experiences.

Advancing Professional Development

A third theme that emerged involved advancing professional development. Superintendent Meyers utilized a strategic approach to professional development. Accordingly, the district engaged in diversity, equity, and inclusion workshops, consultancies, and partnerships meant to develop the social justice skill of Superintendent Meyers alongside district and school leaders. Superintendent Meyer's commitment toward developing the capacity of district and school leaders was illustrated in several examples throughout the study.

Superintendent Meyers referenced a series of professional development sessions as a motivator and an opportunity to frame his vision and commitment toward diversity, equity, and inclusion through critical action. He leveraged this opportunity to not only shape the development of others, but also to address and confront bias or microaggressions exhibited by a few school leaders. For example, during a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) training for district and school administrators, Superintendent Meyers observed two individuals laughing and mocking their colleagues, seemingly not taking the professional learning experience seriously. This inference was drawn from their remarks toward colleagues who exhibited vulnerability during the training sessions. Subsequently, Superintendent Meyers engaged in a challenging dialogue with these individuals, critiquing their participation in this initiative. He asserted, "This is what I believe in, and if you don't believe in this, and if you're not willing to lead this work,

then this isn't the right place for you." Following this conversation and due to ongoing

professional development, the superintendent emphasized that one of these same individuals has

since exhibited considerable growth and a heightened dedication to the ongoing DEI efforts. This

example suggests that Superintendent Meyers intentionally used professional learning as a

catalyst to develop the capacity of leaders by confronting bias and communicating expectations

for the behaviors of leaders to orient towards anti-bias, socially just mindsets.

Take, for example, a principal's reflections on a professional learning session named

Student Panel Discussion: Bullying and Bias. The principal's remarks illustrate Superintendent

Meyers's vulnerability and commitment to improving the district:

So we had a PD with kids. A panel of kids with a wide range of diverse backgrounds told

us how their experiences were in our public schools. Not all of it was good. But to me,

when you do that, as a superintendent and leader, you're vulnerable because kids will tell

the truth, whether you like it or not. That was my favorite PD of 31 years…so the

superintendent tells it like it is he, and he puts us in positions to do the best we can for

these kids. And he's always trying to do more.

Correspondingly, another school leader reflected on a professional learning experience

demonstrating the vision and priority of shaping the district and leaders with a social justice

orientation, "You could see the Superintendent's commitment to that," and then went on to say,

"I don't know how impactful it was… the superintendent introduced it at a really bad time for

principals, and he pushed us to take time because it was that important." Confirming that despite

being a challenging time for school leaders to make the time to engage in professional learning,

the Superintendent prioritized the development of leaders. She further explained that while the

"timing was tough," Superintendent Meyers's commitment to the work was clear, and she "saw the superintendent grow."

District and school leaders articulated how this supported their development and orientation toward social justice leadership. For example, Superintendent Meyers emphasized the importance of having the right leaders and teachers in schools who are tough but fair and understand students' developmental needs. Superintendent Meyers encouraged district and school-level leaders to lead DEI work by emphasizing priority, modeling practice, and vulnerability and, importantly, by engaging in this work alongside the folks he expects to lead the work within their schools, acknowledging,

> I try to lead professional development so that they see that I'm not just talking the talk. I'll share activities with them. I'll lead activities with them… I mapped out one DEI activity that they could do a month at their faculty meeting…that builds on their capacity so that they can go back and replicate so it starts trickling down into the classrooms.

Another example of professional development utilized by Superintendent Meyers to build school leaders' capacity was the development of principal professional learning communities. In an attempt to center principal practice focused on district strategic priorities, Superintendent Meyers shared that he restructured principal meetings to showcase the practice of principals to create a professional network of learning and leading from one another. The first session showcased one principal's approach to implementing a strong Instructional Leadership Team. (Instructional Leadership Teams: from development through implementation, 2023). Superintendent Meyers shared, "I wanted to set the bar high with the first principal and encourage healthy competition." He thought that this would provide an opportunity for the

growth and development of the instructional leadership focused on equitable practice at the school level.

Superintendent Meyers saw his efforts at this professional development as building on the work of others, noting, "The work started prior to me, but I think I've tried to take it to the next level. I've probably done more than the previous superintendent because I think the times have changed." Superintendent Meyers critiqued his efficacy in this area. He reflected that he had not done enough to impact social justice work at the classroom level: "That's probably something I would give myself an F on." He also expressed that he wants people to authentically lead work, not "be forced to do it." Thus, the superintendent appears to recognize that increased monitoring and holding leaders accountable is important to ensuring the transfer of knowledge and skill to all staff.

Additionally, Superintendent Meyers partially attributes the development of leaders' capacity building to strategic partnerships with outside organizations. For example, their work with the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) and Northeastern University initiative "Eliminating Hate in Sports." He described the impact, "They work with our coaches and students to address the hate, bigotry, and racism that has been prevalent in sports." He commented that the Athletic Director leading this work would resist attending professional development, particularly involving diversity, equity, and inclusion, "And this guy, who's in his mid-50s and White as chalk, is leading this meaningful work." Superintendent Meyers further asserts, "We're slowly getting there to try and change mindsets and building capacity." It appears that partnerships and consultants have been important to developing the SJPKS capacity of district and school leaders.

Superintendent Meyers was strategic in developing the capacity of district and school leaders through providing professional development. He partnered with consultants and created collaborative opportunities within the district to advance learning. However, while he advocated for this professional development Superintendent Meyers acknowledged that schools have made limited progress in implementing DEI activities. This is despite these efforts to build capacity among principals. For instance, he noted:

> I try to lead by example, share my vision, and push my principles but also understand that everyone's leadership style and capacity is at a different level, pushing and encouraging my principals to lead this work at the building level is important.

This continues to confirm the development of SJPKS is iterative and requires consistent, ongoing opportunities for learning, support, and reflection in order to enact in daily practice.

Promoting Community Empowerment

Equally important to the work done with district and school leadership is ensuring the community is a part of and has a voice in the work of social justice. A fourth theme that emerged regarding how the superintendent enacted his SJPKS to develop the capacity of district and school leaders involved promoting community empowerment. Multiple district and school leaders, including Superintendent Meyers, highlighted the implementation of strategies for engaging stakeholders across the district and school community as a lever for developing the capacity of others to enact social justice.

A key action of Superintendent Meyers to engage community members to address systems-level change is that of Community Input Teams (CIT). CITs are structures to engage stakeholders in "problem of practices" to provide voice and agency. The superintendent, two

district leaders, and a principal noted these groups act as catalysts for change and community voice and engagement. The CIT Guidebook illustrates the desired outcomes for each team and notes members of the district office leadership team are partners with the CIT. A district-level leader described the strong community representation efforts that district leaders made to ensure broad representation and that "everyone's voices were heard." Another district leader stated, "Community Input Teams are important from the Superintendent down. It's important to us. As a Social Emotional Learning Committee member, we are talking about piloting trauma-informed PD and partnering with DESE." Superintendent Meyers and District leaders emphasized the importance of this team but also that it is still in its infancy stage.

This illuminates the continued need for partnerships, dialogue, and review of practices at all district levels to consider how bias permeates district and school leadership's educational and classroom practices.

In conclusion, Superintendent Meyers's commitment to social justice was demonstrated through setting vision, fostering vulnerability and self-reflection by modeling critical consciousness, advancing professional development, and promoting community empowerment to develop the capacity of district and school leaders.

<div align="center">**Discussion**</div>

This study explored how a superintendent understands, develops, and enacts social justice pedagogical knowledge and skill (SJPKS) to develop the capacity of others. As illustrated in Figure 3.2, my conceptual framework provided a lens for me to examine how Superintendent Meyers used pedagogy to enact the social justice leadership domains of critical consciousness, social justice knowledge, and skills. For the purpose of this study, I defined social justice

pedagogical practices as the specific instructional methods (pedagogy) used by a leader that encourages others to challenge and transform: unequal power relationships (critical consciousness), inequitable policies (social justice knowledge), and bias-based practices (social justice skills), thereby limiting the opportunities and potential of others. Throughout this study, findings suggest that the specific pedagogical practices employed by the superintendent across the domains of critical consciousness, knowledge and skill were intentional and explicit.

First, the pedagogical practice, as referenced in Figure 3.2 could be extended to setting vision and modeling vulnerability and critical self-reflection which emerged as pivotal in fostering critical consciousness, social justice knowledge and skills. This was evident in the superintendent's setting vision, fostering vulnerability, advancing professional development, and promoting community empowerment, which influenced his advocacy for policy change and system-wide practices. Scholars recognize critical consciousness as comprising social analysis, political agency, and social action (Seider and Graves, 2020). Fostering vulnerability and self-reflection within schools illuminates Superintendent Meyers's intent to mitigate bias-based practices and promote systemic equity. By encouraging openness among educators and students, biases are brought to light, fostering greater awareness and a proactive stance in addressing discriminatory practices within educational settings. This approach supports Superintendent Meyers's own development and that of others.

Additionally, as referenced in Figure 3.2 Superintendent Meyers centered his leadership around social justice by intentionally establishing professional learning and partnerships to develop his own SJPKS and in turn that of others. SJPCK emphasizes social justice knowledge and an understanding of the systems of oppression, privilege, and power. Developing and

understanding social justice knowledge requires awareness of the current practices, systems, policies and behaviors, laws, and practices that govern our schools in manners that systemically exploit some community members and advantage others (Dyches & Boyd, 2017). Superintendent Meyers recognized that SJPKS was a developmental process, and therefore takes time, strategic and specific knowledge building, and practice implementing knowledge through skill. Throughout this study, it was evident that Superintendent Meyer's engaged in various partnerships with organizations to deliver professional development that he would grow from and those within the organization.

Another key practice employed by Superintendent Meyers to develop social justice knowledge was explicit education to support learning leveraging professional development. As illustrated in Figure 3.1 the conceptual framework for social justice knowledge development, my findings revealed that strategic partnership with professional organizations to deliver professional development supported both Superintendent Meyers's understanding and development of social justice pedagogical knowledge and skill. Additionally, professional development influenced how leadership practices were enacted to develop the capacity of others. This study suggested that professional development provided by outside consultants positively impacts district leadership.

The conceptual framework as depicted in Figure 3.2 draws on the principle that particular pedagogical methods serve as an impetus to ensuring that learning within the dimensions of SJPKS occurs. In this case, the development of SJPKS was through a universal approach to professional learning where district and school leaders received the same instructional and activities to cultivate their critical consciousness, knowledge, and skill. A superintendent's

development of critical consciousness, social justice knowledge and skills is critical to

supporting school and district leaders to address the complex nature of leading schools and

reshaping the conditions towards more equitable practices. It is critical to acknowledge that

principals at the school level face many challenges, such as the responsibilities of school

leadership, resistance to change, uncooperative attitudes and beliefs among staff, and exclusive

and entitled expectations from the community when enacting social justice leadership

(Theoharis, 2007).

Conversely, while PD was delivered to district and school leaders to further equity, there

was a disconnect between knowledge development and the readiness to translate into practice on

behalf of school-level leaders. SJPKS involves a linkage across social justice knowledge and

social justice skill as demonstrated in Figure 3.1 depicted in the overlapping circles of the

conceptual framework. This implies the need for interrelated skills required to enact social

justice efforts. Throughout the findings, district-level leaders further supported this claim by

recognizing that school-level leaders attend professional development, yet struggle to engage

their staff in training, consistently address challenges, or confront bias. On the other hand,

leaders emphasized the importance of additional coaching, especially with building principals,

on these topics. Coaching, as a form of professional learning, can act as a catalyst to support

leaders on a personalized basis. This aligns with the Superintendent's recognition that SJPKS is

an evolving process. Establishing a method to evaluate the effectiveness of professional learning

sessions for leaders would be valuable in determining the specific areas for coaching to

prioritize, thereby enhancing individuals' knowledge and skill development in SJPKS. Further,

Superintendent Meyers noted that racial incidents in the district have become more prevalent

during his Superintendency, and leaders require more support in awareness and thoughtful action.

This was shared in the various examples of principals relying on district leaders to dialogue with parents and the community on issues of race, diversity, identity, and inclusion. On one hand, it was clear that district and school leaders recognized the superintendent's social justice commitments to mitigate disparities. On the other hand, the ability to support school leaders to enact this commitment presented challenges.

Consistent messaging from the Superintendent's Office to building-based leaders is crucial to confronting systemic barriers, mindsets, and challenges in the school/community context. School leaders rely on district support to engage in difficult conversations, resolve problems between students, and respond to families and the community. The superintendent has established a vision, commitment, and goals, although the necessary structures and policies may not have been implemented or coordinated yet.

Moreover, the Superintendent can demonstrate his further commitment to developing the knowledge and skill of leaders through ongoing professional learning, coaching, and consistent support to demonstrate his recognition of the process of cultivating SJPKS overtime. Overall, while there is a commitment to providing professional learning through consultants and partners, and communication of a vision towards a more socially just district, this data reveals and continues to support the notion that the development of social justice pedagogical knowledge and skill is a developmental process by which all members of the district are at different levels. Therefore, the resistance leaders face continues to be a push-pull in navigating on the part of the

Superintendent and his team. This may require the Superintendent and the district office team to engage in more opportunities to develop self-reflection, knowledge and skills.

Take, for example, Superintendent Meyer's assertion that Critical Race Theory is a college-level course. Rather than dismiss the discussion, this presents an opportunity for the Superintendent to further the capacity of the community and school boards on the tenets of critical pedagogy and elements of critical race theory. Educating the community on critical pedagogies would be beneficial to begin to engage the community in the underpinnings of critical race theory to shine the light on these particular challenges that have come up across schools in the district. Engaging in dialogue about education and social justice is an opportunity to educate the community in developing their understanding of critical pedagogy as an educational philosophy that seeks to empower educators, students, and the community to question and challenge dominant narratives and structures in education. In addition to recognizing and celebrating a range of viewpoints, experiences, and identities, it promotes inclusive and equitable education. By prioritizing Critical Pedagogy, educators can establish educational settings that foster dialogue, empathy, and collective action, laying the foundation for more equitable and inclusive schools and communities (Dyches & Boyd, 2017, Freire, 1970).

All of these elements are framed in the conceptual framework demonstrated in Figure 3.2 requiring specific SJPKS. A possible pedagogical approach to developing the SJPKS of district and school leaders could be to individualize the way in which leaders deepen their understanding of SJPKS. Similarly to the nature of an educator of students, it is necessary to determine the readiness of students along the standards for which we teach, set goals, and strategically provide an instructional plan and support to support their growth. In the same way, a superintendent can

approach the development of SJPKS in others. The process of determining a leader's entry point in the journey of developing SJPKS, setting goals, and designing a plan for building knowledge, and mentoring the enactment of SJPKS on an individual basis may strengthen the connection between knowledge and skill that presented as a gap.

Overall, the conceptual framework in Figure 3.2 provided a lens to analyze how Superintendent Myers demonstrated and understood SJPKS by using specific pedagogical practices to develop the capacity of others, illuminating a continued need for ongoing support and learning to enact SJPKS.

Limitations

There are several limitations to this study. I will discuss two. First, it is necessary to recognize my experiences navigating systems of privilege and oppression within the education system as a White woman who attended public school and serves as an educational leader in a mid-size urban district. I acknowledge that my race, gender, and position of authority afford me certain advantages and blind spots that may impact my research.

I am aware of the potential power dynamics at play in my research and aimed to approach my work with humility, openness, and a willingness to learn from diverse perspectives. Ultimately, my role as a researcher and educational leader is one of continuous growth and learning as I work towards creating more equitable and just schools for all students. My interest in investigating the role of the superintendent as a social justice leader was primarily influenced by my experience serving as a principal of a turnaround school under several superintendents. I realize the role of superintendent is complex, and as a principal, I was only sometimes aware of the socio-political components of the role. In leading turnaround at the school level, I faced

support and resistance from the district office. My research questions intended to understand better how a superintendent's SJPKS may influence those decisions to support or resist the principal's actions. Throughout the study of Superintendent Meyers and the context of the Olympia School District, I realized similarities between the district and districts in which I have served as a leader practitioner. Hence, I acknowledged that my personal background and real-life experiences could impact my research. To enhance the credibility of my analysis, I collaborated on interviews, verified findings, and cross-referenced interview data with documentation. Throughout the study, it was necessary to ensure data checking to ensure my experiences did not interfere with the data report.

An additional limitation of this study is the single case study design. Though a case study design has numerous benefits, a bounded system of a single district represents a small sample size. Overall, the limitations of a single case study of one superintendent are that it may not be possible to make recommendations from the findings that apply to other contexts. Equally important, it relies on the individual's perception and experience (Stake, 2003). Due to these factors, the study may not be more generalizable to other school districts. Additionally, conducting a research study involving the superintendent, district leaders, and school leaders can present challenges considering the daily demands of critical roles. The comprehensive collection of diverse data significantly bolsters the robustness and depth of a research study. This study was limited to interviews and document review and would therefore be strengthened with the use of additional data points such as observations. Finally, this dissertation's programmatic nature limits the study's parameters. Consequently, the limited data collection and analysis period is

challenging. This challenge provides the rationale for focusing on single cases versus multiple cases.

Implications and Conclusion

This study has implications for practice, policy, and future research related to social justice leadership and capacity building among district and school leaders. Regarding practice, this study illuminated the ongoing need for the support of leaders in translating their social justice knowledge into actionable practice. Therefore, it is recommended that along with ongoing professional development, support for coaching and mentoring be implemented to support the navigation of social justice initiatives when leading schools. The evidence in this study suggested that the superintendent and district leaders possessed some social justice knowledge and skills, but lacked strategies to apply these in strategic, systemic ways. This implies that superintendents should prioritize intentional mentoring and coaching to bridge the gap between social justice knowledge and practical implementation.

Additionally, professional development should align with evaluation rubrics to ensure continuous improvement and accountability in advancing social justice capacity. For instance, annual reviews could include specific benchmarks for social justice capacity-building actions, ensuring accountability and enactment. However, questions arise regarding the evaluators' capacity to monitor implementation effectiveness. Therefore, oversight mechanisms such as Professional Development Plans and licensure renewal should be scrutinized to ensure alignment with the superintendent's influence on district culture and commitment to student achievement and experience. Understanding these implications is essential for fostering equitable and inclusive educational environments under superintendent leadership.

This study has implications for policy and future research as well. Future studies could explore the transformation of educational practices at the local level to determine whether policies are aligned with the district's vision and mission of equity in education. In this study, Superintendent Meyers actively advocated for policy changes concerning student enrollment and recruitment in vocational schools. His actions not only demonstrated his proficiency in Social Justice Pedagogical Knowledge and Skills (SJPKS) but also offered insights into how superintendents utilize SJPKS to influence local, state, and federal policies. It's important to note that School Committees and boards hold the responsibility for developing and implementing policies within districts, ensuring alignment with federal and state regulations. Therefore, these governing boards must engage in critical self-reflection, social analysis, political agency, and action to ensure they do not continue to perpetuate the status quo. Hence, boards require further education and learning to ensure they realize the complexities of social justice knowledge to enact policies for socially just schools. Therefore, requirements for school board education around scrutinizing current policy and practice and examining their own bias is imperative. School board members are sensitive to public opinion and may hesitate to change their mindset if they perceive it as conflicting with popular sentiment or risking their electoral success. This is challenging since politicians may fear criticism or backlash from their peers, constituents, or the media if they openly change their mindset or take positions that diverge from established norms or party platforms. Addressing these challenges often requires a combination of persuasive arguments, public pressure, leadership from influential figures, and creating opportunities for dialogue and education.

Finally, this study focused on one superintendent within the context of their district, a mid-sized urban school district. Further inquiry would contribute to the research by investigating a sample of superintendents, their approach to developing their SJPKS, and how they leverage this knowledge and skill to develop the capacity of others. Another approach for inquiry regarding the superintendent's enactment of SJPKS would be to investigate two superintendents with varying positionality in an urban school district. The variability of positionality is that one superintendent has grown their career internal to the district they lead, and another hired from outside the district. A similar study could investigate whether a superintendent's racial identity impacts the ability to engage in transformative shifts in practice. District size influences the ability to make more systemic change and at what pace. An investigation into leadership style and its impact in cultivating the capacity of others would provide more depth to this study. It could influence the field to determine further gaps in the work of mid-size urban district leaders, shed light on resistance faced, and how the approach to this work may impact systemic change differently. Another option would be to compare superintendents based on context, for example, that of an urban vs rural community. A final angle to this research could be to engage in a comparison case study of a high-performing district vs a district in turnaround in understanding SJPKS and developing leadership capacity.

In conclusion, this study explored a superintendent's development and understanding of social justice pedagogical knowledge and skill coupled with an investigation of how they enact this to develop the capacity of district and school leaders. The findings revealed that the superintendent's demonstration and comprehension of social justice pedagogical knowledge and skill, particularly through critical consciousness, underscores the interconnectedness of

knowledge and skill. This critical self-reflection propelled the superintendent's dedication and determination to engage in political and critical action, shaping the district's educational, financial, and environmental landscape. Through vision and priority setting, fostering vulnerability and self-reflection, strategic professional development, and community empowerment efforts aimed at enhancing the capacity of district and school leaders, the superintendent unequivocally showcased a steadfast commitment to social justice.

The discussion has demonstrated the significance of these findings related to the conceptual framework of critical consciousness, knowledge, and skill. Evidence revealed a throughline conceptualizing pedagogy as the enactment of knowledge and skill. Overall, this research advances our understanding of a superintendent's cultivation of social justice pedagogical knowledge and skill and suggests topics for further investigation.

Chapter Four[5]

Discussion

The Olympia School District aimed to meet the needs of their increasingly racially and ethnically diverse student population. Throughout our studies, leaders highlighted both instructional and social justice leadership strategies to close opportunity and achievement gaps. Their identities, positionality and approaches all differed despite working within a district positing equity-centered priorities. In the following section, we will synthesize cross-cutting themes that emerged across our respective, individual studies in response to our overarching research question: How do educational leaders cultivate and promote SJPKS? We will then identify implications for practice, policy and future research related to social justice leadership.

Four Themes

Our individual studies explored how school leaders define, cultivate, and promote SJPKS in their contexts. Across our studies, four themes emerged: critical self-reflection, perceptions of district-level infrastructure and strategic planning, school-level instructional infrastructure and capacity building and gaps in social justice pedagogical skill.

Critical Self-reflection

Critical self-reflection is one of the three key tenets of critical consciousness, along with critical motivation and critical action (Freire, 1973). Critical self-reflection is described as reflection that raises one's awareness of their own bias and beliefs on power and privilege (Capper, 2006). As echoed in the literature, critical self-reflection is important because it directly

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[5] This chapter was jointly written by Julia Bott, Derrick Ciesla, Rodolfo Morales and Marybeth O'Brien

connects to and influences a leaders' capacity to promote SJPKS (Dantley, 2005a, 2008; Furman, 2012; Freire, 2000; Madhlangobe & Gordon, 2012, Seider & Graves, 2020).

It is important to note that the journey towards critical self-reflection is not linear, it is complex and nuanced. Throughout our study, we found that leaders demonstrated varying degrees of their own awareness. Our findings highlight these nuances while revealing patterns across respondents with higher and lower indications of critical self-reflection. In general, leaders who demonstrated stronger critical self-reflection were more apt to collaborate with their teachers to dismantle perceived inequities. On the other hand, leaders who demonstrated limited critical self-reflection were less likely to recognize the important role of other leaders in collaborating to lead the work and were more likely to have instances of biased and deficit mindsets.

Some leaders demonstrated critical self-reflection as they narrated how their upbringing and identity markers influenced their beliefs and notions of social justice leadership. Superintendent Meyers, for example, shared his experience as a first-generation immigrant and multilingual learner to inspire his team to ensure that students' needs are met. His ability to simultaneously recognize systems of oppression he navigated while also owning the privileges he holds as a White male demonstrated his ability to negotiate multiple truths as he reflected on his positionality.

Similarly, Principal Adams described her own identity as a White woman in a predominantly White female field that aims to serve communities of color. She described how her comfort level in discussing issues of race did not equate to her knowing more than others. In fact, Principal Adams reflected on instances where she learned from families of color about

racial and cultural differences. Principal Adams pointed to such instances as critical moments for her own growth. Principal Adams' ability to reflect on her upbringing and current experiences empowered her to think critically about race, power and privilege as she collaborated with her educators.

Superintendent Meyers and Principal Adams were able to critically self-reflect in ways that led to personal and professional growth. Their critical self-reflection allowed them to consider how their perspective may be similar and/or different from that of their community members. Additionally, they both exhibited humility as they described their trajectory towards learning more about race and power as well as doing more to break down barriers for students.

Furthermore, some leaders also practiced strategies to cultivate relationships with educators, students and families in order to support the development of SJPKS. For example, Superintendent Meyers focused on learning directly from students during his listening tour. He leveraged this opportunity to be on the ground, learning from the students he set out to serve. As a result, he was able to gain the trust of students, teachers and families, as he enacted his strategic plan to center and address diverse students' needs.

Similarly, Principal Adams fostered the necessary conditions for educator risk-taking to support the development of their capacity to engage in critical self-reflection. Educators in her community described their principal supporting them to enhance curriculum and implement culturally affirming and engaging pedagogy. Different forms of support, including formative coaching conversations, explicit modeling and guided practice through professional development structures directly provided emotional and intellectual safety that allowed them to confront feelings of uncertainty or self-doubt. Additionally, educators in her community reflected on how

she both modeled critical self- reflection and implemented practices to support their growing awareness of their own intersectional identities and relationship to privilege and power.

On the other hand, some leaders demonstrated conflicting levels of awareness. Principal Ferrington, for example, was able to name his identity as a White Christian male as influencing his approach to leadership. In particular, he reflected on how his spiritual ideology had influenced him to be a "servant" leader. However, Principal Ferrington also made several comments that reflected racial bias and deficit thinking. Such comments included a description of Black males as coming from dysfunctional families, as well as a messaging that he knew what was best for Black children despite their own concerns over his biases. Despite the disconnect between his critical self-reflection and biased comments, Principal Ferrington was highlighted by news sources and press releases as a leader who advocated for rigorous course selection and eliminated barriers to AP courses and dual enrollment for students.

Conversely, we also found that many school leaders did not demonstrate critical self-reflection and were therefore seemingly unaware of their own biases. These leaders often concentrated on addressing deficiencies, inadequacies, or perceived shortcomings within specific groups or individuals in their responses to questions related to race, power, and privilege, particularly in the context of Black male students. For instance, Principal William's reflection of his upbringing as a first-generation Irish immigrant growing up navigating alcoholism and poverty with his family led him to feel more connected with what he perceived to be the experience of his students. He also shared an anecdote of a Black family communicating trust in him, as well as a separate anecdote to demonstrate his willingness to go into the community where his students of color resided. Lastly, while he communicated a desire to break down

barriers and close gaps for students of color, he also stated that teachers' race-based bias was not an issue and that there was no systematic way to identify when a student needs additional support. Principal William's comments mirror commonly debated issues related to critical self-reflection, such as leveraging perceived closeness to blackness to evade acknowledgment of biases, and almost portraying schools as a post-racial society, devoid of racism.

In order to overcome these barriers, our conceptual framework suggests leveraging the dimensions of pedagogy and critical consciousness to raise leaders' "consciousness about power inequities" (Capper, 2006, p. 216). Weaving these two dimensions would support leaders in disrupting their own deficit thinking so that they can begin to develop critical consciousness, embrace asset-based thinking about minoritized students and communities, and support the development of their educators' SJPKS. As noted above, critical self-reflection is a journey. As leaders come to understand how their identity impacts their view of the world and influences their perceptions, assumptions, and biases, they progress toward more sophisticated levels of critical self-reflection. Additionally, it is human nature to experience setbacks and regression on the journey towards critical self-reflection. Without the ability to critically self-reflect, leaders risk acting on unconscious biases and countering social justice efforts (Dyches and Boyd, 2017; Seider & Graves, 2020; Watts et al., 2011). Furthermore, a leaders' lack of critical self-reflection directly impedes their capacity to cultivate the SJPKS of others.

While critical self-reflection is paramount to individual leaders' own cultivation and promotion of SJPKS, and therefore, an important first step to being able to develop others' SJPKS, it is also the role of the district to ensure systems and structures allow for successful cultivation of SJPKS.

Perceptions of District-level Infrastructure and Strategic Planning

A second theme that emerged across our research studies was the influence of district-level infrastructure and strategic planning on the ability for SJPKS to be enacted across the district and schools. Across our studies there was evidence that elements of the district strategic plan were aimed toward initiatives to advance social justice, however, there were contrary positions on whether school-based leaders were able to enact said initiatives to promote SJPKS. Furthermore, leaders identified several compounding variables that negatively impacted their social justice leadership including district-level resistance, obstructive attitudes, and a lack of support from central office administrators. In the Olympia School District, there were varying perceptions of district-level support for SJPKS enactment and risk-taking, further influencing how leaders developed and cultivated SJPKS.

Three school leaders positively portrayed the district's support for enacting social justice leadership in schools. They communicated appreciation for the district's strategic plan which highlighted diversity and a call to action to increase equity. For example, one principal praised the superintendent for naming and addressing the core priorities of the district, putting leaders in positions to do the critical work of building inclusive communities for students of color. Similarly, another leader reflected on his twenty-year career in the Olympia District, noting that the present focus on equity and social justice had never been stronger. These were just a few examples of many who highlighted the Superintendent's core values, communicating a trust in his vision and an appreciation of how he fostered a sense of safety in risk-taking.

One district-level infrastructure that was leveraged to develop leaders' capacity was professional development. School leaders described how the district provided professional

development, through strategic partnerships to develop leader's awareness of how power, race, and privilege manifest within schools. On one hand, some school leaders stated that as a result of professional learning, they felt empowered to engage in critical conversations about how bias presents in the actions and habits of members within the school and district teams. They addressed this through professional collaboration, dialogue, and educator evaluation. On the other hand, school leaders communicated that district leaders often requested principals "pull back" or reverse decisions in order to relieve the tensions that arose through political or community-based resistance.

One principal shared more nuanced feelings about the district's support of social justice efforts. This school leader expressed that the district was taking the right steps in naming equity as a focus, pointing to professional development and leadership agendas to cultivate leaders' critical consciousness. However, the principal also recounted instances of pushback from the district, particularly around what they described as an equity-driven restorative approach to discipline. They identified tension as they acknowledged the district's efforts to cultivate leaders' SJPKS while simultaneously experiencing a lack of central office support

In stark contrast, four leaders were vocal in critiquing district support. For example, a district-level leader shared deep concern that the equity work in the district was still surface-level and at times superficial. They expressed a deep desire for increased urgency around action. At the school level, one principal recounted how their implementation of the "Black Lives Matter at School Week" initiative was met with opposition and ultimately, a directive from the superintendent to alter or eliminate the program. In another instance, the same principal was also advised to tread lightly when discussing issues of gender and sexual identity. Lastly, another

school leader expressed frustration that conversations and professional development seemingly led to no action or change. This leader conveyed a lack of accountability for change as a pitfall in the district, noting that professional development started and ended as conversations without follow-through. Collectively, these leaders conveyed a desire for further support from district leadership.

While perceptions of district support were mixed, it is important to note that the two leaders who had positive experiences with the level of support were identified as leaders who demonstrated limited critical self-reflection. Alternatively, leaders who were most critical of district support demonstrated greater skill in critical self-reflection. In summary, leaders' perceptions of district support influenced their sense of efficacy and empowerment in enacting social justice leadership.

Within our conceptual framework, the intersection of curriculum and critical consciousness is leveraged to raise "consciousness about power, privilege, and associated issues" (Capper et al., 2006, p. 214). Our findings echo the importance of districts leveraging the dimensions of curriculum and critical consciousness to develop leaders' SJPKS, particularly within their strategic planning and professional development of leaders. These actions not only develop leaders' content knowledge and skill but also provide them with the emotional safety to take risks as they enact the district's vision. Of note, Capper et al. (2006), highlights the importance of emotional safety for risk-taking as prospective leaders develop SJPKS.

School-level Instructional Infrastructure and Capacity Building

A third theme that emerged across our research studies was the role and impact of a clear instructional infrastructure on a leaders' ability to effectively and consistently implement

instructional leadership practices to cultivate SJPKS. School leaders leverage instructional leadership to improve the quality and effectiveness of classroom teaching and learning in order to advance student achievement (Murphy, 1998; Waters, Marzano & McNulty, 2003; Tivnan & Hemphill, 2004; Leithwood & Mascall, 2008; Heck & Moriyama, 2010; Grissom et al., 2013, Francois, 2014). In order for leaders to leverage instructional leadership practices such as supervision and evaluation, professional learning, and collaborative planning cycles, they must also have a solid instructional infrastructure (Chenoweth, 2021). This includes systems and structures to support the consistency and coherence of these practices across their respective communities. This may include structured cycles of learning within common planning time, a strategic sequence of professional development intentionally aligned to instructional priorities, a well-defined system and protocol for instructional rounds, and/or a schedule and cycle for observation and feedback with normed protocols.

In schools with stronger instructional infrastructures, we found greater implementation of instructional leadership practices and more favorable educator reflections on the influence of those practices on instructional capacity. For example, Principal Adams emphasized the importance of consistent formative feedback, clear structures for school-based professional development, and cycles of learning for collaborative planning meetings as essential vehicles for the cultivation of educator SJPKS. In turn, educators across three different grade levels in this school community consistently described how these structures aligned to and reinforced school-wide priorities. Furthermore, they discussed how engagement in these practices supported their critical self-reflection, identification of curricular bias, and capacity to norm on instructional practices that support diverse learners. Conversely, in schools that lacked this

infrastructure, we identified inconsistent and at times ineffective implementation of instructional practices and priorities. Additionally, we found a disconnect in how educators experienced those practices. For example, at Olympia High School both the school leader and educators identified the negative impact of gaps in the instructional infrastructure on the implementation of instructional practices to cultivate educator SJPKS. While Principal Ferrington highlighted competing district priorities and scheduling barriers as contributing factors to the inconsistent implementation, educators in his community identified different constraints. Specifically, they highlighted inconsistencies in adult learning structures and priorities, along with a lack of accountability for the leadership team to effectively convey social justice learning to their respective teams. These factors contributed to an uneven implementation of SJPKS development. In these counter-examples, the social justice capacity building became more fragmented, largely dependent on the instructional leadership capacity and SJPKS of individual department chairs and team leads.

While both examples illuminate the need for a consistently implemented, school-wide infrastructure for instructional practices as a lever for SJPKS, it is equally important for leaders to have the knowledge and skill necessary to leverage these practices. In essence, a strong instructional leadership infrastructure does not guarantee that leaders have the prerequisite social justice knowledge or skill to enact instructional leadership practices effectively. Therefore, it is important that districts foster both the leaders' capacity to implement a strong instructional infrastructure as well as their social justice knowledge. Our conceptual framework describes this knowledge of social justice as the need for "school leaders to know about evidence-based practices that can create an equitable school" (Capper et al., 2006, p 213). Finally, even with

well-developed social justice knowledge, leaders also require support to build the skill of enactment.

Gaps in Leaders' Social Justice Pedagogical Skill

A fourth theme that emerged was a clear gap in school leaders' capacity to enact social justice pedagogical skill in order to develop this capacity within educators. As articulated in our conceptual framework, there is a distinction between the social justice knowledge of "evidence-based practices" leaders and educators require to create "more equitable schools" and the skills they must possess to enact that knowledge through praxis. Effective leaders for social justice must be equipped with both knowledge and pedagogical skills (Capper et al., 2006, p. 213). Data gathered throughout the current study indicated that many central office and school-level leaders demonstrated and articulated greater levels of knowledge about social justice leadership than skill set to enact this knowledge within their contexts. This was echoed by educators' perceptions and experiences in their respective communities.

Many school leaders highlighted the implementation of culturally competent and responsive professional development facilitated by an outsider partner, as a meaningful knowledge-building experience. The professional development was intended to build an understanding, awareness, and theoretical foundation of social justice principles within the context of education. Specifically, some leaders reflected that participation in these professional learning sessions deepened their consciousness of implicit bias, structural and systemic inequities, and the socio-political factors that contribute to dynamics of power and privilege within different identity groups. However, several leaders also noted that these professional development sessions fell short because they did not sufficiently equip leaders with the requisite

practical skills to effectively translate social justice knowledge into tangible, capacity-building actions with their staff.

This gap in support for skill development is exemplified by Principal Adams of Cherry Hill Elementary School, a school leader who demonstrated a well-developed social justice knowledge base. In order to build the knowledge of her faculty, Principal Adams initiated a book study to encourage staff members to engage in critical thinking regarding unconscious biases, as well as to understand the historical and systemic factors that perpetuate educational inequalities. In essence, Ms. Adams designed this professional learning opportunity to cultivate educators' critical consciousness. However, Principal Adams also articulated that she desired coaching and support to ensure educators translated their developing consciousness to curricular planning and instructional practice to improve learning outcomes for students. Principal Adams was vocally craving support to cultivate her social justice skill development and ensure that educators' social justice knowledge actually transformed practice and contributed to a more equitable and empowering educational experience for minoritized students. These reflections were also echoed by her educators who acknowledged that their growth in knowledge did not directly translate to the skills necessary to critically consume curriculum, facilitate more culturally responsive and affirming pedagogy, and cultivate cultures of belonging for all students.

Likewise, an associate school leader expressed frustration when his efforts to enact the expressed values of the school and directly address the behaviors of an educator were undermined. This associate school leader reflected that a great deal of intentionality was given to providing professional development to the leadership team in order to cultivate their knowledge and capacity to identify and enact antiracist practices. However, when an educator who used the

"N-word" during a literature class was confronted with the harmful impact of their actions on students, other leaders interceded, defending the educator's actions and ultimately resisting accountability. Thus, while professional development focused on building awareness and understanding of power and privilege, it did not appear to advance leaders' ability to transfer such knowledge to practice and actively confront issues of bias.

It is important to note that SJPKS is a developmental journey. One does not simply achieve it. The developmental nature of SJPKS signifies a process that includes progress and setbacks within different domains of SJPKS, rather than steady advancement. Additionally, multi-faceted identities, experiences and contexts influence an individual's growth and willingness to progress on the developmental journey toward SJPKS. We see an example of this play out as leaders gain social justice content knowledge while simultaneously desiring to expand their skills to enact social justice leadership and transform their schools into more inclusive and equitable learning communities. As leaders build their capacities, they can further develop their SJPKS.

In summary, it was evident through multiple interviews, survey analysis, and document reviews that district and school leaders are in various phases of building their social justice knowledge through the frame of critical consciousness. Grasping the principles and theories of equitable education is crucial for social justice pedagogical knowledge and foundational to the work of social justice leadership. Furthermore, as outlined by our conceptual framework, leaders for social justice also require specific skills to advance this work in their communities. However, our study revealed a gap in leaders' development of social justice pedagogical skill due to an overemphasis on building their consciousness and content knowledge and a lack of district

attention and strategic support for the development of skills. Building a strong social justice skill set in district and school leaders will empower them to create the conditions for the cultivation of educator SJPKS, even in the face of opposition.

The four themes from our studies shed light on how leaders cultivate and promote SJPKS, including through the use of critical self-reflection, district-level strategic planning and initiatives, school-level instructional infrastructure and capacity building, and gaps in social justice pedagogical skill. Additionally, we've identified how contextual factors, such as perceptions of district support, influence leaders' actions. Our exploration of SJPKS underscores the urgency to create equitable, socially just learning environments for students. We recognize how crucial it is for leaders to possess the critical consciousness, knowledge, and skills to lead this work. Without these competencies, efforts to foster a more inclusive and equitable education may not take effect.

Implications

Our research examined how educational leaders cultivate and promote SJPKS. The findings of this study carry implications for practice, policy, and future research related to social justice leadership and capacity building.

Leadership Practice

Our study illuminates several leadership competencies and practices that are essential for the successful cultivation of educators' SJPKS. These include the development of critical self-reflection, implementing infrastructure for adult learning, and intentional support for skill enactment.

Findings from our study highlight the foundational role of critical self-awareness, a tenant of critical consciousness, in cultivating SJPKS. District and school leaders require intentional support to continue to build this self-reflection so that they consistently confront their own biases and their role in perpetuating inequities and responsibility for correcting them. Furthermore, leaders with stronger critical self-reflection are better equipped to create the conditions to cultivate it within their leadership teams and classroom educators, as evidenced by our comparison of teacher perceptions across schools. Support for critical self-reflection requires explicit professional development to build leader knowledge and understanding of their positionality, privilege, and power. Furthermore, leaders require regular coaching and feedback to ensure they are enacting this awareness to inform decisions and actions, disrupt bias and deficit thinking, and advance equity. Leaders at all levels of the organization should use explicit equity protocols that require deep reflection around the intended and unintended consequences of their actions.

Additionally, findings demonstrate that schools require a strong infrastructure in order to implement instructional leadership practices for the cultivation of educators' SJPKS. Leaders require explicit training, support, and models of instructional leadership infrastructures that promote coherent and consistent practices across the school community. Leaders of the Olympia District expressed how they used infrastructures for adult learning to cultivate SJPKS. However, leaders also demonstrated a need for professional development on how to build educators' capacity for SJPKS through curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment. To fill this gap, trainings may provide leaders with strong models and guided practice to facilitate cycles of educator

learning, tools and protocols for collaborative planning sessions, processes for supervision and evaluation, and/or a clear framework for designing a strategic arc of professional learning.

Furthermore, findings suggest that even with a foundational knowledge of social justice content, curriculum and pedagogy, and a strong instructional infrastructure, leaders still require explicit support in social justice skill development to build this capacity in others. Data underscores a need for districts to identify clear and consistent frameworks for bias-based curriculum interrogation, protocols for culturally responsive data analysis, and/or culturally and linguistically affirming instructional practices to ensure fidelity across the system.

Additionally, findings showed that in the absence of explicit skills, leaders fall short of their goals of leading equity initiatives and building educator capacity. This was evidenced by leaders avoiding direct conversations with their direct reports, placating adult emotions, and stifling equity-driven initiative. Data suggests that leaders require training in specific protocols for equity-framed data analysis in order to more effectively facilitate data reviews and action planning. Additionally, structures such as district and school-level instructional rounds using common observation tools that explicitly center equity practices and/or unit and lesson interrogation simulations can effectively build this capacity.

Our findings also demonstrate that even within the context of our study, in a state that touts its progressive ideals, barriers impede educational leaders' abilities to cultivate SJPKS. Leaders expressed how politicized view-points, polarizing topics, and disagreements around the celebration of identities impeded their efforts. As a result, leaders leveraged their social capital, built coalitions, and strategically chose their words when communicating about social justice work. Oftentimes leaders worked to find common ground or rebrand their goals in order to

slowly move towards their vision, garner buy-in, and prevent disharmony within their community. These skills are often overlooked by leader preparation programs and professional development. Such programs should aim to increase these skills as they are necessary for the strategic cultivation of SJPKS.

Finally, this research study illuminated inconsistencies between leaders and educators' perceptions and experiences of the prioritization, implementation, and support for SJPKS. Furthermore, several educators and leaders identified the need for clear systems and procedures of accountability for the implementation of social justice practices. Findings demonstrate that districts and schools would benefit from common observation tools that explicitly link expectations for the implementation of social justice knowledge and practices to the supervision and evaluation system and process. Additionally, district and school-level climate and culture surveys should explicitly identify components of SJPKS to gather data on student, family, and faculty perceptions of the implementation of practices. This data should be analyzed at the district and school level and leveraged to inform strategic planning and adjustments to leadership and educator practice.

Leadership Policy

Current federal, state, and local policy has begun to consider the complex set of challenges faced in the educational arena to ensure equitable experiences for students. Our study identifies some of the pervasive challenges within the educational system toward enacting social justice, particularly to personnel and practice.

This study illuminated the disconnect between district and school leaders' social justice pedagogical knowledge and the skill necessary for effective implementation. In order to ensure

that leaders enter the field with both the necessary knowledge and skill set to advance this work, higher education programs must explicitly build leader capacity for SJPKS. Therefore, there is a need to reform higher education policy to ensure that leadership preparatory programs are accountable for teaching and developing leaders' SJPKS.

Likewise, in assuring leaders possess this knowledge and skill, and arguably the courage to do this work, certification, recertification, and evaluatory processes require revisions that would encapsulate elements of SJPKS. For sitting leaders, a focus on social justice should be required for endorsement and license renewal. This would support the advancement of social justice leadership along with a requirement for professional development points aligned to social justice and instructional leadership knowledge and skill development.

Districts, including superintendents, school leaders, and educators, should expect accountability for enacting SJPKS. While our study revealed that a district emphasized social justice knowledge development, findings also indicated an underdeveloped capacity for knowledge enactment. Requiring evidence of social justice practice through the evaluation system would hold district and school leaders accountable for supporting SJPKS development. Furthermore, implementing a robust audit of districts' educational programs, services, and policies will reshape the political landscape and educational policies in schools.

While this study focused solely on one school district, it is evident that a school district is only one component of a larger system that encompasses the state and federal levels of policy. This highlights the necessity for an audit mechanism at both the state and federal levels. Implementation of consistent audits should reveal inequities in opportunity, access, and achievement as well as key practices that improve the experience for minoritized populations.

Such audits serve as a form of accountability for districts, state, and federal educational institutions to enact transformative educational change.

Key policy at the local level lies in the purview of school committees. Our findings suggest that school committees hold influence over how districts enact social justice and equity-driven initiatives, including politicizing and resisting social justice policies. In order to ensure current and future policies at the local level are revised to meet the criteria for an equitable approach to education, members of this governing body require knowledge to do this. Findings shed light on the necessity for policies that hold members of school committees/boards accountable for participating in training aimed at enhancing their capacity to assess policies through a social justice lens. Further, state and federal funding should be tied to assurances whereby local boards should be required to provide proof of credible professional development programs that support their development in this area in order for the districts to remain in compliance with such policy. Additionally, school committees and districts should provide proof of revisions or adoption of policies that demonstrate a move towards equity-driven practices.

Future Research

This study investigated the implementation of SJPKS by school leaders within the school environment. Our research indicates that many of the school administrators we interviewed currently lack the essential skills to consistently carry out capacity building for SJPKS in their respective communities. This can be directly attributed to the insufficient infrastructure and lack of effective and sustained capacity building within the school district. The aforementioned limitations and trends identified through this study illuminate potential future research on leadership for SJPKS.

Our findings highlight the influence of contextual factors such as demographic shifts, racial tensions, and socio-political pressures, in enacting social justice efforts within a district. Additional research conducted in diverse contexts would contribute to validating findings and the generalizability of our results. For example, research can investigate how the size of a district or school may impact leaders' ability to implement equity-driven initiatives. Alternatively, research can explore how the political affiliations of key stakeholders and the community at large may influence the approaches leaders take as they enact SJPKS. Lastly, research can explore how demographic shifts in a community influences a district's vision for SJPKS.

This study referenced the impact of school committee policy and feedback on district and school-level leadership decision-making for SJPKS. Future research could investigate how processes of school board member appointment, such as elections or mayoral appointment, impact their comfortability in advocating for transformative changes in education. Research can investigate the impact of professional development on school committee members' ability to engage in equitable decision-making. Furthermore, a study could investigate how school committee members' attitudes, perceptions, and recommendations change as a result of ongoing professional development on equity and socially just educational leadership.

Families and communities can be critical and influential partners at both the school and district level. Overall, our findings demonstrate a lack of deep and meaningful engagement with families around the work of social justice. In particular, many leaders communicated perceptions of family and community resistance towards social justice efforts, particularly among families who identify as White. Additionally, one leader demonstrated deficit thinking when discussing families of color and their capacity to contribute to the priorities of the school community.

Furthermore, many leaders communicated that families often have varying understandings of their district's vision, priorities, and strategic initiatives to advance equity and divergent experiences of implementation at the school level. While our collective study focused primarily on leader understandings, skills and actions, and educator experiences, this highlights the need for further research to explore family and community perspectives and experiences of leaders' and teachers' efforts to cultivate SJPKS.

Furthermore, while this study did explore how educators' experience their leaders' efforts to cultivate their SJPKS, it did not investigate the relationship between particular curricular or pedagogical practices and student perceptions, behaviors, or outcomes. Future research is needed to fully investigate the possible correlation between leaders' cultivation of SJPKS and students' level of critical consciousness, engagement, and/or achievement.

Finally, both district and school leaders referenced the pivotal role of external partners in their SJPKS capacity building. However, our findings highlighted an overarching disconnect between leader and educator knowledge building and skill development. Future research should investigate how districts and school communities leverage external partners to build SJPKS within their leadership and educator workforce, with a particular focus on evidence of application, accountability, and follow-through.

Conclusion

Social justice leadership is complex and nuanced. Our research highlights how leaders' diverse identities and consciousness of power dynamics shape their approach to fostering equity in schools and districts. The foundation for social justice leadership is laid through continual, critical self-reflection and a deep understanding of how structural and systemic inequities

intersect and perpetuate within educational institutions. Furthermore, our collective studies highlight the important role of organizational infrastructure and strategic planning to set the framework for SJPKS development. While an infrastructure does not guarantee that SJPKS will flourish, it will not develop coherently within the school and district without it. Finally, our research illuminates the need for leaders to possess a comprehensive knowledge of research-based social justice practices and a well-developed skill-set that ensures enactment. It is the interplay of all of these factors- individual, school, and district level- that creates the necessary conditions for the cultivation of SJPKS within educators across the organization.

Even with the necessary knowledge, skill, and organizational infrastructure, leaders face invariable obstacles to the advancement of social justice within their context. Our research sheds light on leaders' urgency to enact social justice leadership, while also navigating contexts that are imbued with individual, structural, and institutional racism. As cities and states across the United States become majority-minority, much like the Olympia School District, the need to cultivate and promote SJPKS becomes increasingly necessary and complex.

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Appendix A

Superintendent Interview Protocol

Guiding Research Questions:

1. How does a superintendent develop and understand their own social justice pedagogical knowledge and skill?

2. How does a superintendent enact their social justice pedagogical knowledge and skill to develop the capacity of district and school leaders?

Coding

Research Question 1(RQ1)

Research Question 2 (RQ2)

Background Building (BB)

Instructional Leadership (IL)

Pedagogical Knowledge (PK)

Social Justice Leadership (SJL)

Critical Consciousness (CC)

Social Justice Knowledge (SJK)

Social Justice Skill (SJS)

Script

Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to work with you and the district to gain a perspective on the district's work around instructional and social justice leadership. Our study

will examine how school and district leaders cultivate educators' (leaders and teachers) social justice pedagogical knowledge and practice. Each member of our team is studying an aspect of this topic. I am particularly interested in the superintendency, the way a sitting superintendent is developing their social justice knowledge and using this knowledge to develop the capacity of district and school leaders.

We are doctoral students at Boston College. All of whom have served as principals in various districts and district leaders. This work is important to us as we hope to gain insights and add to the field of education as it relates to topics of instructional and social justice leadership.

During our time together, I hope to gain insight into your background, your leadership as it relates to this topic, and the way in which you put this knowledge into practice. I want to thank you in advance for taking the time to meet with me. I expect this interview to take about an hour. With your permission, I would like to record our interview in order to have it transcribed and accurately recorded your responses. Please feel free to request that I stop recording at any time during the interview.

Superintendent Interview Protocol: Unstructured Superintendent Interview

Background Building/ Establishing Rapport with Participant

Please share your experiences as an educator prior to becoming the superintendent.

- What roles did you have?

- What did this work look like?

What inspired you to become a superintendent?

- What educational path did you take to get here?

- Share any additional influences or experiences that may have led to your journey toward the superintendency.

Social Justice Knowledge:

First, I would like to get to know a little about your orientation towards social justice:

- How do you describe your understanding of social justice? (SJK)

- In your opinion, what is the role of the superintendent in promoting social justice and equity work across the district, and how do you ensure that this remains a priority in your work as a superintendent? (CC, SJL)

- How have you come to understand these ideas?

  - What professional organizations or formal learning have you engaged in?

  - Are there any ways you support your growth in this area?

    - Formal or informal networks?

- How do you communicate your beliefs about social justice throughout the district and community? (SJL)

Social Justice Pedagogical Knowledge

Next, I would like to get an understanding of how your knowledge and learning translates to the daily work or goals you have for your district, leaders, and schools. For this component, we reference the terms social justice pedagogy. Social justice pedagogy, we define as the way that

your knowledge of social justice and equity is delivered across the district and in schools to "change" what and how things are done.

- Can you define your understanding of social justice pedagogy and how it informs your leadership of a diverse school district? SJL

- Can you describe a specific example of how you have addressed systemic barriers to equity and access in your district? (SJK, SJS)

Pedagogical and Social Justice Knowledge

We define social justice pedagogical knowledge and skill as the teaching strategies that lead to the implementation of evidence-based practices or the practice that bridges the theories around social justice with action.

- How do you enact strategies that develop this understanding across the district?

- How do you ensure that your district's curriculum and instructional practices promote social justice and equity for all students? (IL, SJPK)

- Can you describe your approach to the district's professional development opportunities related to social justice and equity, and how do you ensure that all staff members have access to this training? (IL, PK)

- How do you ensure that students from diverse backgrounds feel included and represented in the curriculum and school culture? (CC, SJK)

Social Justice and Community: Pedagogical Skill

We know that in this work, people embody a social justice consciousness within their belief system; this impacts the way they show up and consider the work, curriculum, and initiatives that districts and schools work to improve. I would like to learn more about how you learn about power, privilege, and associated issues related to social justice and equity and how this shapes the way you engage with the community you lead and serve.

- How do you engage with community members and families to ensure that their voices are heard, and their perspectives are considered in decision-making related to social justice and equity? (SJS)

- How do you develop an understanding of power relations in education? (CC)

- How do you work with the school community to help others recognize these power relationships? (CC, IL, SJS)

Overall, if there was one change you could make for the district in such a way that all resistance, challenges, and barriers were removed, what would it be and why?

Appendix B

School and District Leader Interview Protocol

Marybeth O'Brien + Julia Bott	
Purpose	Interview Questions
Background	• Please briefly share your position and tenure in the district.
Instructional Leadership	• What does instructional leadership mean to you?
Content Knowledge & Skills	• What practices do you use to build your teachers' content knowledge and skill?
Social Justice Leadership	*If the interviewee makes a clear connection between Instructional Leadership and Social Justice Leadership only ask question one below. • What does social justice and/or equity-centered leadership mean to you? • How do you as a leader communicate your beliefs about social justice to your stakeholders? • What practices do you use to build your teachers' knowledge of social justice and/or equity-centered teaching? • How do you see this influencing teachers' knowledge and capacity to implement social justice and/or equity-centered

	teaching?
	● How have you come to understand these ideas about social justice?
	● What professional organizations or formal learning have you engaged in?
	● Are there any ways you support your growth in this area?
Social Justice Leadership Instructional Leadership	● Do you see a relationship between your work as an instructional leader and a social justice leader? ● What instructional practices do you use to build your teachers' knowledge and skill around social justice and/or equity centered teaching? ● .How do your teachers translate these instructional practices into their teaching for social justice and/or equity? How do you know?
Social Justice Pedagogical Knowledge	● How have you used data to monitor the effectiveness of initiatives aimed at promoting educational equity?
District	● In your opinion, what is the role of the superintendent in promoting social justice and equity work across the district?

	● Recognizing that equity is part of the strategic plan, how has the superintendent communicated and elevated this priority? ● Can you describe your approach to the district's professional development opportunities related to social justice and equity? ■ How do you ensure that all staff members have access to this training?

Marybeth O'Brien + Derrick Ciesla	
Purpose	**Interview Questions**
Background	● Please briefly share your position and tenure in the district. ● What roles did you have? ● What did this work look like?
Positionality	● What inspired you to become a school leader? What educational path did you take to get here? ● Share any additional influences or experiences that may have led to your journey toward being a school leader.

Social Justice Knowledge	- How do you describe your understanding of social justice/social justice leadership? - In your opinion, what is the role of the superintendent in promoting social justice and equity work across the district? - Recognizing that equity is part of the strategic plan, how has the superintendent communicated and elevated this priority? - How do you as a leader communicate your beliefs about social justice to your stakeholders? - How have you come to understand these ideas about social justice? - What professional organizations or formal learning have you engaged in? - Are there any ways you support your growth in this area?
Social Justice Pedagogical Knowledge	- How does your knowledge of social justice and equity inform your practice as a principal to improve outcomes for students? - Can you describe a specific example of how you have addressed systemic barriers to equity and access in your district? - What data or evidence do you collect to monitor the effectiveness of strategies and initiatives you have implemented to promote

	educational equity, and how do you use this information to inform decision-making and improvement efforts?
	● How do you enact strategies that develop this understanding across the district? ● How do you ensure that your district's curriculum and instructional practices promote social justice and equity for all students? ● How do you ensure that students from diverse backgrounds feel included and represented in the curriculum and school culture? ● Can you describe your approach to the district's professional development opportunities related to social justice and equity? ● How do you ensure that all staff members have access to this training?
Trauma (supports)	● Use dese data - recognizing Olympia is a diverse district not only by racial identity and student with a disability, socio-economic status how has that impacted Black Males. ● What systems have you put in place to ensure that your school is meeting the needs of Black males who have experienced trauma? ● Can you provide examples of specific instructional practices or interventions you have implemented that have been successful in

	fostering resilience and positive outcomes for Black male students who have experienced trauma? ● How do you collaborate with teachers, counselors, and other support staff to promote positive outcomes for Black males who have experienced trauma? ● How do you involve families and the wider community in supporting the asset-based development of Black male students who have experienced trauma? ● What types of professional development or training opportunities have you provided for teachers to enhance their understanding of trauma-informed and asset-based instructional practices for Black Males?
Trauma (gaps)	● We know that there are many barriers, including systemic and institutional barriers, that hinder the success of Black students and students with trauma. How have these barriers manifested in your schools? ● In your experience, how have you seen misconceptions hinder educators from providing asset-based instructional practices for Black males who have experienced trauma? ● In your experience, what do you feel has hindered the academic achievement of Black males who have experienced trauma?

	● How do you think deficit-based thinking impacts educators' interactions with black male students?
Social Justice	● In your opinion, what additional resources or supports would be beneficial to further the academic achievement of Black males with trauma?

Marybeth O'Brien + Rodolfo Morales	
Purpose	Interview Questions
Background	● Please briefly share your position and tenure in the district. ● What roles did you have? ● What did this work look like?
Social Justice Knowledge	● How do you describe your understanding of social justice? ● In your opinion, what is the role of the superintendent in promoting social justice and equity work across the district? ● Recognizing that equity is part of the strategic plan, how has the superintendent communicated and elevated this priority? ● How do you as a leader communicate your beliefs about social justice to your stakeholders?

	● How have you come to understand these ideas about social justice?
Social Justice Pedagogical Knowledge	● How does your knowledge of social justice and equity inform your practice as a principal to improve outcomes for students? ● Can you describe a specific example of how you have addressed systemic barriers to equity and access in your district? ● How have you used data to monitor the effectiveness of initiatives aimed at promoting educational equity?
	● How do you ensure that your school's curriculum and instructional practices promote social justice and equity for all students? ● How do you ensure that students from diverse backgrounds feel included and represented in the curriculum and school culture? ● Can you describe how the district's professional development opportunities related to social justice and equity have impacted your work as a principal? ● Follow up→ impact on teacher practice, impact on school-based PD

Expectations	● How do you know when a teacher has high academic expectations of students? ● How do you know when a teacher has low academic expectations of students?
Comfort Discussing Race	● In the context of today's world, with both the Black Lives Matter movement and the anti-CRT movement influencing policies in schools, how comfortable do you feel talking about race? 　○ (follow up) What has contributed to your comfort level? 　○ (follow up) Would you say you feel more or less comfortable talking about race with folks that share your racial identity?
Bias	● Can you tell us how you've supported teachers to recognize their own biases, particularly as it relates to race and students? ● Can you tell me about a time that you worked with a teacher or teachers that held low expectations of students of color? 　○ (probe on race-based bias) 　○ (follow up) What specific steps did you take? 　○ (follow up) What specific steps do you wish you had taken? 　○ (follow up) Were there any steps you purposefully avoided? Why?

	○ (follow up) How does/did the racial makeup of your staff influence your approaches?
	○ (follow up) How does/did your racial identity impact your approach?

Julia Bott + Derrick Ciesla	
Purpose	Interview Questions
Background	● Tell me more about yourself and a brief history of your work here?
Instructional Leadership	● What does instructional leadership mean to you?

Content Knowledge & Skills	● What practices do you use to build your teachers' content knowledge and skill?
	   ○ Probe: Can you provide an example or a practice you use?
	   ○ (follow up) How do you see this practice influencing teachers' content knowledge and skill?

Social Justice Leadership	*If the interviewee makes a clear connection between Instructional Leadership and Social Justice Leadership only ask question one below.

	- What does social justice and/or equity-centered leadership mean to you? - How do you communicate your beliefs about social justice throughout your school and community? - What practices do you use to build your teachers' knowledge of social justice and/or equity-centered teaching? - How do you see this influencing teachers' knowledge and capacity to implement social justice and/or equity centered teaching?
Social Justice Leadership Instructional Leadership	- Do you see a relationship between your work as an instructional leader and a social justice leader? - What instructional practices do you use to build your teachers' knowledge and skill around social justice and/or equity centered teaching? - How do your teachers translate these instructional practices into their teaching for social justice and/or equity? How do you know?
Social Justice	Can you provide examples of specific instructional practices or interventions you have implemented that have successfully fostered resilience and positive outcomes for Black male students who have experienced trauma?

	● How do you collaborate with teachers, counselors, and other support staff to promote positive outcomes for Black males who have experienced trauma?
Trauma (supports)	● Recognizing Olympia is a diverse district not only by racial identity and student with a disability, socio-economic status, how has that impacted Black Males. ● What systems have you put in place to ensure that your school is meeting the needs of Black males who have experienced trauma? ● Can you provide examples of specific instructional practices or interventions you have implemented that have been successful in fostering resilience and positive outcomes for Black male students who have experienced trauma? ● (probe): How do you collaborate with teachers, counselors, and other support staff to promote positive outcomes for Black males who have experienced trauma? ● (probe): How do you involve families and the wider community in supporting the asset-based development of Black male students who have experienced trauma? ● What types of professional development or training opportunities have you provided for teachers to enhance their

	understanding of trauma-informed and asset-based instructional practices for Black Males?
Trauma (gaps)	• We know that there are many barriers, including systemic and institutional barriers, that hinder the success of Black students and students with trauma. How have these barriers manifested in your schools? • In your experience, how have you seen misconceptions hinder educators from providing asset-based instructional practices for Black males who have experienced trauma? • In your experience, what do you feel has hindered the academic achievement of Black males who have experienced trauma? • (probe) How do you think deficit-based thinking impacts educators' interactions with black male students?

Julia Bott + Rodolfo Morales	
Purpose	Interview Questions
Background	• Tell me more about yourself and a brief history of your work here?

Instructional Leadership	● What does instructional leadership mean to you?
Expectations	● How do you know when a teacher has high academic expectations of students? ● How do you know when a teacher has low academic expectations of students?

Instructional Leadership Content Knowledge and Skills	● What practices do you use to build your teachers' content knowledge and skill?
	  ○ Probe: Can you provide an example or a practice you use?
	  ○ (follow up) How do you see this practice influencing teachers' content knowledge and skill?

Comfort Discussing Race	● In the context of today's world, with both the Black Lives Matter movement and the anti-CRT movement influencing policies in schools, how comfortable do you feel talking about race?
	  ○ (follow up) What has contributed to your comfort level?
	  ○ (follow up) Would you say you feel more or less comfortable talking about race with folks who share your racial identity?

Bias	● Can you tell us how you've supported teachers to recognize their

	own biases, particularly as it relates to race and students?
	
	 ● Can you tell me about a time that you worked with a teacher or teachers who held low expectations of students of color?
	
	  ○ (probe on race-based bias)
	
	  ○ (follow up) What specific steps did you take?
	
	  ○ (follow up) What specific steps do you wish you had taken?
	
	  ○ (follow up) Were there any steps you purposefully avoided? Why?
	
	  ○ (follow up) How does/did the racial makeup of your staff influence your approaches?
	
	  ○ (follow up) How does/did your racial identity impact your approach?

Social Justice Leadership	*If the interviewee makes a clear connection between Instructional Leadership and Social Justice Leadership only ask question one below. ● What does social justice and/or equity-centered leadership mean to you? ● What practices do you use to build your teachers' knowledge of social justice and/or equity-centered teaching? ● How do you see this influencing teachers' knowledge and capacity to implement social justice and/or equity centered

	teaching?
Social Justice Leadership Instructional Leadership	● Do you see a relationship between your work as an instructional leader and a social justice leader? Please elaborate. ● What instructional practices do you use to build your teachers' knowledge and skill around social justice and/or equity centered teaching? ● How do your teachers translate these instructional practices into their teaching for social justice and/or equity? How do you know?

Derrick Ciesla + Rodolfo Morales	
Purpose	Interview Questions
Background	● Tell me more about yourself and a brief history of your work here? ● Please briefly share your position and tenure in the district. ● What roles did you have? ● What did this work look like?
Expectations	● How do you know when a teacher has high academic

	expectations of students? ● How do you know when a teacher has low academic expectations of students?

Comfort Discussing Race	● In the context of today's world, with both the Black Lives Matter movement and the anti-CRT movement influencing policies in schools, how comfortable do you feel talking about race?
	
	    ○ (follow up) What has contributed to your comfort level?
	
	    ○ (follow up) Would you say you feel more or less comfortable talking about race with folks that share your racial identity?

Bias	● Can you tell us how you've supported teachers to recognize their biases, particularly regarding race and students?
	
	● Can you tell me about a time that you worked with a teacher or teachers who held low expectations of students of color?
	
	    ○ (probe on race-based bias)
	
	    ○ (follow up) What specific steps did you take?
	
	    ○ (follow up) What specific steps do you wish you had taken?
	
	    ○ (follow up) Were there any steps you purposefully avoided? Why?

	○ (follow up) How does/did the racial makeup of your staff influence your approaches? ○ (follow up) How does/did your racial identity impact your approach?
Trauma (supports)	● Can you provide examples of specific instructional practices you have implemented that have resulted in positive outcomes for Black male students with trauma? 　○ (probe): How do you collaborate with teachers, counselors, and other support staff to promote positive outcomes for Black males who have experienced trauma? 　○ (probe): How do you involve families and the wider community in supporting the asset-based development of Black male students who have experienced trauma? ● What systems have you put in place to ensure that your school is meeting the needs of Black males who have experienced trauma?
Trauma (gaps)	● We know that there are many barriers, including systemic and institutional barriers, that hinder the success of Black students and students with trauma. How have these barriers manifested in your schools?

	● In your experience, how have you seen misconceptions hinder educators from providing asset-based instructional practices for Black males who have experienced trauma? ● In your experience, what do you feel has hindered the academic achievement of Black males who have experienced trauma? ○ (probe) How do you think deficit-based thinking impacts educators' interactions with black male students?
Social Justice	● Can you define your understanding of social justice pedagogy and how it informs your leadership in this school district? ● How do you communicate your beliefs about social justice throughout the district and community? ● Can you describe a specific example of how you have addressed systemic barriers to equity and access in your district? ● What data or evidence do you collect to monitor the effectiveness of strategies and initiatives you have implemented to promote educational equity, and how do you use this information to inform decision-making and improvement efforts? ● What types of professional development or training opportunities have you provided for teachers to enhance their understanding of trauma-informed and asset-based instructional

	practices for Black Males?
	● In your opinion, what additional resources or supports would be beneficial to further the academic achievement for Black males who have experienced trauma?

Appendix C

Educator Interview Protocol

In this section, I have selected questions that will be asked of educators. These questions are aligned to four key areas: context setting, instructional leadership knowledge and practices, social justice leadership knowledge and practices, the intersection between instructional and social justice leadership and transfer across the organization. .

Question Key Alignment

Context Setting	CS
Instructional Leadership	IL
Social Justice Leadership	SJL
Instructional Leadership + Social Justice Leadership	IL + SJL
Transfer	T

Questions   Focus Area

These questions will include some variation of the following:

Name   CS

Years of experience in education

Role in the school

Years of experience in current role

Primary responsibilities

1. What is the instructional vision of the school?   IL

2. What specific structures or practices implemented by your school leader

   exist to support your development as an educator?

3. How do you experience these structures or practices as an educator?

4. How, if at all, do they influence your knowledge and practice?

5. What does it mean to be a social justice (or equity-centered) educator to you?   SJL

6. What specific structures or practices implemented by your school leader,

   support the development of your social justice (or equity) knowledge and skill?

7. How do you experience these structures or practices?

8. How, if at all, do they influence your knowledge and practice?

9. How, if at all, does equity or social justice intersect with the instructional vision   IL + SJL

   of the school?

10. What specific structures or practices support the intersection of instruction

    and equity?

11. How do you experience these structures or practices?

12. How, if at all, do they influence your knowledge and practice?

13. Do you think if I asked other educators in this community, I would get   T

    similar responses?

Appendix D

Document/Artifact Review Notetaker

Type of Document	

☐ Memorandum	☐ School Improvement Plan	☐ Presentation
☐ Internal Memo		☐ Website
☐ Community/Family Memo	☐ District Improvement Plan	☐ Newspaper/Digital Media Article
☐ Agenda	☐ School Committee Minutes	☐ Press Release
☐ Data Records/Analysis	☐ Professional Development Plans	

Document Classification

☐ Personal (diary, notes)

☐ Official (press releases)

☐ Restricted Access (minutes, agendas)

☐ Open Access (organization reports, website, publications)

☐ Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)

	Document/Artifact Characteristics ☐ Letterhead ☐ Slogan ☐ Department Information ☐ Notations ☐ Highlights ☐ Signatures
	Date(s) of Documents:
	Author(s)/Creater(s) of Documents, Position/Role:
	Intended Audience:
	Document Information:

A. Purpose of Document:

B: Evidence of Purpose:

C. Evidence of Authenticity

D. Evidence of Credibility

Appendix E

Criteria for Superintendent Selection

- Leads a mid-size urban district that is comprised of a diverse student population

- A minimum of three years of leadership experience at the superintendent level

- Served in the residing district for a minimum of two years

- Experience as an instructional leader at the building level

- Commitment to equity, which is evidenced by a mission and vision linked to addressing systemic inequities particularly related to minoritized populations

Appendix F

Social Identity Wheel

Name:_____

Years as a principal _____

Years as a principal at your school_____

Select and write down your **three most salient identities** in the corresponding boxes below.

Socioeconomic class		Age

Physical, emotional, developmental (dis)ability		Gender

Socioeconomic class

Age

Physical, emotional, developmental (dis)ability

Gender

Religious or spiritual affiliation		

Religious or spiritual affiliation

Sexual orientation

		Sexual orientation

Nationality

Race

Nationality		Race

Appendix G

Survey

Question Key Alignment & Interview Questions

Context Setting	CS
Cultural Awareness Adult	CAA
Cultural Awareness Student	CAS
Engaging All Students	EAS
Professional Development for Equity	PDE

Question	Responses					Code
How often do school leaders encourage you to teach about people from different races, ethnicities, or cultures?	Almost never	Once in a while	Sometimes	Frequently	Always	CAA
How often do you	Almost	Once in a	Sometimes	Frequently	Always	CAA

think about what colleagues of different races, ethnicities, or cultures experience?	never while				
How confident are you that adults at your school can have honest conversations with each other about race?	Not at all confident	Slightly confident	Somewhat confident	Quite confident	Extremely confident	CAA
At your school, how often are you encouraged to think more deeply about race-related topics?	Almost never	Once in a while	Sometimes	Frequently	Always	CAA
How comfortable	Not at all	Slightly	Somewhat	Quite	Extremely	CAA

are you discussing race-related topics with your colleagues?						
How often do adults at your school have important conversations about race, even when they might be uncomfortable?	Almost never	Once in a while	Sometimes	Frequently	Always	CAA
When there are major news events related to race, how often do adults at your school talk about them with each other?	Almost never	Once in a while	Sometimes	Frequently	Always	CAA

How well does your school help staff speak out against racism?	Not at all well	Slightly well	Somewhat well	Quite well	Extremely well	CAA
How often do you think about what students of different races, ethnicities, or cultures experience?	Almost never	Once in a while	Sometimes	Frequently		CAS
How comfortable are you discussing race-related topics with your students?	Not at all	Slightly	Somewhat	Quite	Extremely	CAS
How easy do you find interacting with students at your school who	Not at all easy	Slightly easy	Somewhat easy	Quite easy	Extremely easy	EAS

are from a different cultural background than your own?		
In response to events that might be occurring in the world, how comfortable would you be having conversations about race with your students?	Not at all Slightly Somewhat Quite well Extremely	EAS
When a sensitive issue of diversity arises in class, how easily can you think of strategies to address the	Not at all easy Slightly easy Somewhat easy Quite easy Extremely easy	EAS

situation?						
At your school, how valuable are the equity-focused professional development opportunities?	Not at all valuable	Slightly valuable	Somewhat valuable	Quite valuable	Extremely valuable	PDE
How often do professional development opportunities help you explore new ways to promote equity in your practice?	Almost never	Once in a while	Sometimes	Frequently	Always	PDE
Overall, how effective has your	Not at all	Slightly	Somewhat	Quite well	Extremely	PDE

school administration been in helping you advance student equity?		

What race(s) do you identify as?	CS
How many years have you taught?	CS
What gender do you identify as?	CS
Which school do you work at?	CS