DEVELOPING A SOCIAL JUSTICE CURRICULUM: INTERSECTIONS OF IDENTITY, COMMUNITY, INHERITANCE AND EXPERIENCE

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Abstract

Developing a Social Justice Curriculum:

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Social justice is a frequently employed concept in the development of classroom curriculum and discussion of instructional practice in schools. This study documents the process undergone by two public high school educators to create a social justice curriculum. The study data is comprised of semi-structured interviews, classroom observations and a document analysis of curricular texts. The research goal is to gain a broader understanding of how educators' values, life experiences and political motivations impact the content and intended outcomes of curriculum for social justice. The data collection and analysis emphasize the educators' voices as they reflect on: 1) how they defined social justice and selected their curriculum's content; 2) how they came to see a need for greater justice in society through their life experiences; and 3) how they developed values attributing to a personal desire to take action in their classroom and community.[1]

[1] All the names of individuals, places, institutions, etc. have been changed for confidentiality purposes.

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I. Introduction

The term "social justice" can reflect a multitude of perspectives, life experiences, and political, intellectual and cultural traditions. Commonly held ideas about *what* qualifies as social justice, and simplistic definitions of what social justice *is,* should be explored, probed and critiqued. In a broad sense, social justice has been described as the belief that everyone deserves equal social, political and economic rights and opportunities (Adams, Bell & Griffin, 2002). While a basic statement of social justice is helpful as an umbrella idea, and is a rational starting point for a more complex conversation, it lacks the necessary explanation of the complimentary values or principles that are inherent within social justice (like tolerance, compassion, reciprocity, and fairness). Deeper questions remain about the relationship of social justice to individuals' life experiences, acquisition of values, and pursuit of values through action.

When intersected with education, conceptualizing social justice and identifying it in practice can be difficult. Developing school curriculum and instruction that will lead to socially just outcomes for students from diverse backgrounds is complex. With that said, we can understand social justice education as both a process and a goal. "The goal…is full and equal participation of all groups in society", equal "distribution of resources", and an environment where all individuals feel "physically and psychologically safe and secure"; however, the process is nebulous, involving social actors who are simultaneously self-determined and interdependent, having a "sense of their own agency as well as a social responsibility toward and with others" (Bell, 1997, p. 3). In attempting to further understand social justice within education, the context

matters because education and social justice are not static things in either theory or practice. The path to social justice through education does not necessarily look the same across classrooms, schools, curriculums, etc.

One point of departure is the theory that informs us. The logic that leads one to knowing what social justice is (theory) impacts how one realizes or attempts it through action (practice).

> Practice is always shaped by theory… How we approach social justice education, the problems we identify as needing remedy, the solutions we entertain as viable, and the methods we choose as appropriate for reaching those solutions are all theoretical and practical questions… theory enables us to think clearly about our intentions and the means we use to actualize them (Bell, 1997,p. 4)

Theory about the real and ideal relationship between education and social justice is significant. In many respects, it is a revelation of the rationale and *experiences* that have led educators to pursue social justice through education in the first place. Educators reveal their personal theories of social justice through the curriculum they create. Ayers explains that in choosing to move beyond the "packaged" utilitarian curriculum of most schools in order to construct curriculum for a specific school, classroom, and group of learners, teachers reject the notion that "that knowledge is finite and knowing passive" (1992, p. 260). When teachers become involved in attempting to change how schooling contributes to the status quo of inequity, they reject teaching content in the way that it has been prescribed (Gay, 2003). They simultaneously embrace "knowing" as fluid and what is to be known as contested. They also come to rely upon their own values and beliefs about justice in order to construct a curriculum, which teaches toward the learning and

social outcomes that they have in mind. Because curriculum clearly reflects teachers' own beliefs about knowledge and social values, Ayers speaks to how educators' theorizing need be a constant struggle with contradiction and revaluing of self in order to produce just outcomes through curriculum development.

> [As educators] We should resist dogma…We should stay alive to questions, to contradiction, to ambiguity, to the next utterance in the dialogue. And, yes, to spontaneity. We should be for intellect, for continual desire to see more, to know more. And we should be for a morality linked to action (Ayers, 1992, p. 262).

Educators' commitment to struggling with concepts and "staying alive" to contradictions and ambiguities is a way to foster hope in the relationship between education and justice—that it can produce lasting change within society. If practitioners can continuously reflect on how they are conceptualizing education and social justice, they can stay in touch with how their conceptualizations structure, and potentially limit, their instruction and curriculum. Is their conceptualizing serving students and marginalized communities? Do their classroom practices and out-of-school lives reflect "a morality linked to action"?

The struggle over concepts, and the contradictions that struggle entails, has the potential to nurture complacency in practitioners if they lose faith in their ability to have a positive impact or weigh the cost of doing so as too high. However, as Ayers suggests, such struggles can also renew educators' commitment to action in being "for a continual desire to seem more" within the society in which they live. This commitment to action often consists of substantial personal sacrifice. To sustain such personal sacrifice for the achievement of social outcomes is a dilemma facing educators. Marshall and Anderson

(2009) comprehensively discuss the ways in which educators are discouraged from pursuing greater social justice in schools and the breadth of negative consequences that they can personally face in attempting to do so. In particular, they identify the professional environment of educators as discouraging their criticality of discriminatory policies and practices, and of setting an expectation of an apolitical stance to treating "problems" that in fact stem from "historical and institutional racism, sexism, and sexual hierarchies and dominance" (Marshall & Anderson, 2009, p. 7). Such an environment serves to "drive issues underground, silencing those who sense that the needs are deeper, and are tightly connected to societal ills that have included discrimination and unequal opportunity..." (Marshall & Anderson, 2009, p. 7). Whether it is physical safety, financial gain, job security and promotion, or general well-being, much can be compromised in the struggle to pursue social justice. When a commitment to it entails forgoing opportunities tied to privilege, or it demands championing programs and ideals that contribute to one's unpopularity in the workplace, social justice represents large opportunity costs to educators.

Historically, the sacrifices of those who champion social justice in their actions and words have been vast, sometimes severe, and lasting. Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X and Mohandas K. Gandhi are popular figures who exemplify this point—their assassinations represent the sustained opposition to their political work around justice and the intense anger and fear such work can provoke. In the past (e.g., the African American Civil Rights Movement, the Chicano Movement, The Women's Liberation Movement), earnest attempts at achieving equity within the United States have been met with resistance because such actions seek to change the way power and

privilege function within society (Spring, 1989, 2004; Zinn, 1997). The right to education of equal quality drove much of the African American Civil Rights Movement for racial equality in the United States. *Brown v. The Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* (1954) reversed (by overturning the precedent set by *Plessy v. Ferguson*) the constitutionality of segregated public services and facilities. With that said, education (literacy in particular) has been intimately tied to social mobility and civil rights for blacks in the U.S. since pre-Civil War plantation society (Spring, 2004). For over a century, Mexican Americans, Native Americans, Asian Americans, and Puerto Ricans too have struggled for access to equitable schooling, while also combating severe racial discrimination in education legislation, schooling policy, and classroom instruction (Spring, 2004). The fight for full citizenship in the United States, partially evident in the right to learn and be afforded the same educational opportunities as white, middle-class peers, continues (Kozol, 1991, 2005; Orfield 2001). For students of color, and for students from low-income and racially segregated communities, education has represented and continues to represent both the means by which they and their communities are marginalized, and the pathway for achieving greater opportunity and equity.[2]

Today, as in previous times, education practitioners (e.g. teachers, principals, professors) committed to social justice need be *activists*. If social justice is the goal, the status quo of schooling in the United States must change as it does not treat students equally nor produce equitable outcomes (Hall, 2006 b; Kozol 1991, 2005). School

[2] Students of color in this sentence specifically refers to African American, Latino and Native American students and students of other ethnic backgrounds that have suffered educational marginalization as a result of their racial or ethnic identity.

reforms targeted at urban schools and students are especially worrisome as some results indicate extreme measures (like the seizing of school districts) are only expanding achievement gaps and increasing dropout rates.[3] Such reforms indicate that teachers must be engaged beyond their classrooms, principals beyond their schools, and academics beyond their university offices to affect the establishment and implementation of school policy. A focus solely on the creation and instruction of classroom curriculum will not substantially solve schooling inequities in the United States that are rooted in funding, segregated housing, and other systemic forms of racial and class inequality. However, curriculum (particularly with regard to the values embedded and ideas conveyed in classroom texts & materials) is also an important component of social justice education (Hughes, 2007).

Inherent in teachers' commitment to be activists for social justice is a reflection upon the social significance and impact of their education practice. Practitioners' consistent reflection demands a frequent revaluing of their beliefs in social justice and how they are committed to making those beliefs actionable in their classroom practices and out-of-school lives. For many individuals, action is *compelled*. Action becomes a response to combating individuals' opposition to change for social justice and to

[3] The Developing Government Accountability to the People (DGAP) *2006 Report Card for Chicago* heavily critiqued policies of Mayor Daley as he took control of Chicago Public Schools (CPS) in 1995. Grade retention and zero tolerance policies were found to negatively impact low-income and minority students. The report directly raised concerns about social justice with regard to the reforms. CPS zero tolerance policies were described as having "failed to substantially increase safety, and instead has produced an increase in the number of in-school arrests, suspensions, and expulsions" significantly and disproportionately affecting "youth of color and special-needs students" (p. 76) and without providing or funding adequate remediation and alternative-learning programs.

struggling against organized, collective resistance to greater social, political and economic equality.

Both *reflection* and *action* are necessary and complementary aspects of social justice in education practice. To continue earlier discussion of the relationship between theory and practice, it is reflection upon theory—catapulting the subsequent revision of theory—that has the impact to inform action in ways that make it more powerful and toward social justice goals. "[A]t its best, theory also provides a framework for questioning and challenging our practices and creating new approaches as we encounter cooptation, resistance, insufficient knowledge, and changing social conditions" (Bell, 1997, p. 4). Principles of reflection and action may hold special significance for practitioners positioned outside disadvantaged communities, as they often come to the work from a place of greater economic and social privilege, in addition to occupying the unique position of authority as educators. With that said, practitioners of all types can unconsciously dominate those they wish to assist. Teachers can be tempted to "do for" verses "struggle with" marginalized students and their communities (Bell, 1997). Some of the ways in which educators have sought to struggle *alongside* their students: intentionally prioritizing young people's voices and perspectives within classrooms (Pettis-Renwich, 2002); highlighting in practice the tools and skills students will need for social mobility (Delpit, 1995); and using curriculum and instruction to expose the biases that exist within society and create barriers to greater equity (Connolly, 2008; McLaren, 2007). Education practitioners can also struggle for inclusivity within their spheres of influence outside the classroom or school.

An effective struggle for social justice is unified around goals that speak to equity for all people.[4] The realization of such goals necessitates support from people in all spheres of society. Thus, social justice education should not solely be for students of color, or for students from marginalized groups, or for students with stigmatized identities. Students from affluent communities and of privileged identities (e.g. white, middle-upper class) need the education that a social justice outlook provides in order to participate in the disruption of injustice at the individual, communal and systemic levels of society.

> [E]ducators must be intentional in working to address the limitations created by racial isolation in our elementary and secondary public schools […] White children will need to be in schools that are intentional about helping them understand social justice issues like prejudice, discrimination, and racism, empowering them to think critically about the stereotypes to which they are exposed in the culture. Such tools will be needed to help them acquire the social skills necessary to function effectively in a diverse world. These tools will also be essential to foster continued progress in a society still struggling to disentangle the racism woven into the fabric of its founding (Tatum, 2007, p. 20).

Students occupying all social identities, those privileged and underprivileged, need understanding and skills to effectively change society. Struggle for social justice cannot be only ideological or verbally espoused; it must be aimed at the provision of genuine

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[4] Bell further describes the process for attaining social justice as "democratic" and "participatory"; it is characterized as "inclusive and affirming of human agency and capacities for working collaboratively to create change" (1997, p. 4). Rather than processes and tactics that are reliant on a "'power over' paradigm", Bell argues for "power with" processes that include the participation of communities for which social or political change will represent greater liberation (1997, p. 4).

access and opportunity for those who experience marginalization in order to be effective—hence, making beliefs around social justice *actionable.*

II. Literature Review: Part 1: Relevance of Social Justice Education

Why Social Justice is Needed in Education

The study is relevant based on three premises that are exceedingly interconnected: 1. Undemocratic, persistent inequities exist within U.S. public systems of education, healthcare, and law enforcement, which are counter to a tolerant and humane society; 2. Education is central to the alleviation of injustices within society, and it is also a root cause of the perpetuation of such injustices; 3. Education, and particularly public schooling, should be a vehicle for positive social change. The achievement of greater equity through schooling is vital to American society and national identity because the citizenry purport to believe in the universal right (and ability) to pursue a quality life.[5] In summary, the premises of this study affirm that schools should counter the dominant *miseducation* within society that enables and legitimizes the inequitable treatment of its citizens, and undermines democracy.[6]

Persistent Inequalities within the United States

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[5] Clearly stated in the *Preamble* to the United States' *Declaration of Independence* is a belief in the universal right to pursue happiness and a quality life. "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" (Preamble, 2.1). The right to such pursuits is meaningless without the means.

[6] This study supports some critical theorists' conceptualizing of democracy. Giroux has stated that counter to a repressive view of democracy (made popular more recently by proponents of the War on Terror) as hyper patriotic and intolerant of dissent and doubt, we should embrace the importance of a "conception of democracy that is never complete and determinate and constantly open to different understandings of the contingency of its decisions, mechanisms of exclusions, and operations of power" (Giroux, 2003, xiii). Such a perception of democracy supports alternative educational practices that aim to create inclusion both intellectually and socially through providing a "basis for a culture of questioning, one that provides the knowledge, skills, and social practices that encourage an opportunity for resistance, a space of translation, and a proliferation of discourses" rather than promoting "a passive attitude toward power" (xiii).

Within the U.S. publicly-funded systems of education, law, and healthcare, there exists inequity in the quality of services people can access. In some instances, social services are altogether non-existent for individuals occupying lower positions of power within society. Societies, such as that of the United States, are comprised of a hierarchy of social identities. Persons' social identity—meaning their racial, gender, and sexual identity compounded with socioeconomic status, geography (including the neighborhood in which one resides and its resources), citizenship status, and other factors—position them somewhere on a spectrum in regards to varying systems of power. Individuals have unique experiences of injustice as well as collectively experience discrimination as part of a social group or marginalized community. The relationship between social identities and institutionalized oppression in the United States is a broad focus of the curriculum created by social justice educators (Adams, Bell & Griffin, 1997).

U.S. public education is described as an abusive system of power by many critical scholars.[7] Schooling's degree of abusiveness, and intentionality in being so, is contested. However, it is harder to dispute the relationship between education and power.

> In a sense all education is about power—its goal is for people to become more skilled, more able, more dynamic, more vital. Teaching is about strengthening, invigorating, and empowering others. People may not agree about how to get there, but there is general accord that good teaching enables and strengthens learners" (Ayers, 1992, p. 261).

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[7] See various chapters from Saltman, K. & Gabbard, D. , *Education as Enforcement: The Militarization and Corporatization of Schools* (2003) , and McLaren, *Life in Schools: An Introduction to Critical Pedagogy in the Foundations of Education* (5th Ed.; 2007) for a more expanded discussion of how schooling is used for social control, economic exploitation, and maintenance of current inequities and privileges.

Schooling and teaching have social objectives and outcomes; public education is inherently political. However, schooling's political ends may not be openly discussed. How social and political ideals are embedded in institutional practices (such as school rules) is too rarely scrutinized. They can remain part of a *hidden curriculum* within schools, having impact on students' beliefs, intellects and outcomes, but rarely being explicitly stated (Connolly, 2008).

Within systems of power, privilege is expressed in access to services, and in the quality of services that can be accessed. In education, this would mean access to schooling from pre-kindergarten through graduate school and the quality of schools and universities that can be accessed. Economic privilege is reflected in (and reinforced by) one's material means in context of these systems. Social and political privilege is reflected in one's representation in public life and its impact on access. Individual institutions (such as schools, courts, police stations and healthcare providers) within these systems maintain the stratification of access and quality in our society, and they directly contribute to individuals' experiences of injustice.[8] Meanwhile, media entities create popular images and representations that can either legitimize inequities that individuals

[8] Comprehensive reports on discrimination in one or several of these areas exist; the U.N. Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD)'s 2008 Report on the United States under its Article 9 of the *International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination* is an example. However, the following sources (articles, websites and reports—many produced by non-profit human rights and policy organizations) highlight particular incidences and public institutions' inequitable treatment of individuals in law enforcement, healthcare, housing and education: Developing Government Accountability to the People (2006), *A report card for Chicago 2006*; Applied Research Center (2008), *Facing Race: 2007-2008 Legislative Report Card*; MacFarquhar, N., *Protest Greets Police Plan to Map Muslim Angelenos* (2007); Amnesty International (n.d.) Individuals at risk: Criminal Justice (U.S. Human Rights section, website); Amnesty International (n.d) Katrina Survivors (website); Amnesty International (n.d.) Marriage Equality in California (website) .

experience within such systems, or refute them.[9] Media can empower people, or further marginalize communities through the stories that are told and retold about them (Giroux, 1997). Media aimed at youth can legitimize racialized and stereotypical representations of different social groups (e.g. whites, homosexuals, blacks, women), and tells stories that skew and subvert the way privilege and power operate (Alexander, Brewer & Livingston, 2005; Steinberg & Kincheloe, 2004).

Education: Alleviation or Perpetuation of Injustice?

Dewey describes education "in its broadest sense" as "the means of this social continuity of life"; life being "the whole range of experience, individual and racial" and covering "customs, institutions, beliefs, victories and defeats, recreations and occupations" (2007/1916, p. 7). If education is the means by which life (i.e. customs, institutions, and beliefs) is continued than wherein those aspects of life create and justify inequity so education is implicated in that inequity. More specifically, education is implicated in the reproduction of that inequity through the maintenance of institutions, customs and beliefs that support and legitimize it. Consequently, by the same logic, if education (schooling in particular) can be used to disrupt the social continuity of the aspects of life (i.e. the parts of customs, institutions, and beliefs) that marginalize people and silence them, it can disrupt the perpetuation of injustices through them. Dewey's conceptualization of education speaks to its socially reproductive aspects.

While taking into consideration social reproduction, public schooling also has material means and economic implications. Tatum reminds readers that the struggle over

education currently, and during the African American Civil Rights Movement, has strong material underpinnings.

> We need to remember that the fight for school desegregation was not simply a symbolic fight for the acknowledgement of the humanity and equality of all children. Fundamentally it was a struggle for equal access to publicly funded educational resources. Clearly that struggle continues (2007, p.15).

Public education proliferates, as it has in the past, the economic inequity between different racial and ethnic groups in the United States through the policies that structure it and its funding (Ladson-Billings, 1999). Historically and currently, policies and funding directly influence the content and quality of education that students receive (Kozol, 1991, 2005; Spring 2004).

> The reliance of our public schools on property taxes and the localization of the uses of those taxes "have combined to make the public school into an educator for the educated rich and a keeper for the uneducated poor. There exists no more powerful force for rigidity of social class and the frustration of natural potential (Kozol, 1991, p. 207 quoting Coons)

Students that manage to emerge from schooling with particular skill sets and a high level of achievement on standardized tests have a much greater chance of gaining access to selective colleges or promising post-secondary opportunities.[10] Unfortunately, often the lowest income, highest minority student populations are provided with public educations

[10] See Consortium for Chicago School Research (CCSR) Reports: *From High School to the Future: The Pathway to 20* (October 2008), and *From High School to the Future: Potholes on the Road to College* (March 2008) for further discussion.

characterized by the poorest funding and the highest teacher turnover.[11] Such schooling conditions greatly decrease the chances that low-income, students of color will compete with or out perform their middle class, white counterparts in standardized tests. Research suggests that most urban students of color will drop out of school or graduate without mastering many of the necessary content skills to successfully complete college or retain a job in a high-paying profession.[12] A working paper published by the Manhattan Institute (2003) found (based on 2001 data) that "only 20% of all black students and 16% of all Hispanic students leave high school college-ready" (Greene & Forster, see Executive Summary).

Education and Positive Social Change

It is difficult to imagine a more equitable society in the United States without addressing social and economic inequality through the reform of the public education system, thereby, necessarily changing some of our current schooling practices. The three, above-mentioned premises should not be misinterpreted as meaning that social justice education in schools can be a panacea for societal inequity. This is not the case. However, without seeing public education's purpose as related to the achievement of social justice, there is little hope that schooling in the U.S. will systemically change in a way that benefits the most marginalized students in society.

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[11] CCSR recently released a new report (June 2009) entitled *The Schools Teachers Leave: Teacher Mobility in Chicago Public Schools* that explores both the types of schools teachers are most likely to leave and the contributing factors to high turnover.

[12] An article in *The Chronicle for Higher Education*, citing a recent Schott Foundation report, noted several cities that graduate less than half of their black male students from high school (Schmidlt, 2008). Of the small number of black males that do attend college, it's reported that only 36% nationally will complete their degree, and 47% of black female students nationally (Journal of Blacks in Higher Education, n.d.).

To be sure, there are issues with the label of social justice in education programming. A few important questions about the use of social justice as a concept in education are: What does social justice mean in this context? What are the inferred foundations or principles of social justice? What is it achieving (e.g. immediate and long-term outcomes for learning, social mobility, etc.)? Barriers to working openly for social justice within educational workplaces such as universities and schools can indeed be substantial (Darling-Hammond, French, & Garcia-Lopez, 2002; Delpit, 1995; Marshall & Anderson, 2009). The incentives to be complacent within the current structure of education and navigate around its discriminatory effects are often much stronger than educators' incentives to change them (Marshall & Anderson, 2009). Nevertheless, the concept of social justice is currently central to many education programs from school classrooms to post-secondary institutions. If the term "social justice" is not critiqued when assigned to educational programming, curriculum or schools, it seems probable that it could be appropriated to mask *unjust* purposes and to appease those who call for greater justice but do not have sincere interest in enforcing change. Consequently, comprehensive research and discussion regarding what constitutes social justice curriculum and teaching methodologies is important and timely. This study suggests the need for further exploration of how one identifies, knows and understands education systems, curriculum and instruction to be just. Additionally, more research within schools to comprehend how equitable policies and practices are discouraged by school culture and hindered in their implementation by professional norms and the overburden of educators with testing, paperwork and managerial duties, is essential. The disconnection between educators' good intentions and the socially just outcomes that, in

many instances, schools *fail* to produce is simultaneously heartbreaking and unacceptable.

II. Literature Review: Part 2: Western Political Philosophy & Justice

Origins of Justice

Where do ideas about justice come from? Answering the question relies upon historical and social context.[13] Ideas about what justice is and how it is achieved (whether through political activism; legislation; adherence to religious code; or maintenance of family, community, or cultural traditions) are not universal or timeless. They, in actuality, vary depending upon numerous factors. One major variable is *who* is asked the question: where one grows up and in what period of time, and what is the content of one's life experience. Such factors impact how justice is perceived. Rawls discusses this conceptualizing of justice as happening within citizens' formation of a broader *political view*. "A political view is a view about political justice and the common good, and about what institutions and policies best promote them. Citizens must somehow acquire and understand these ideas if they are to be capable of making judgments about basic rights and liberties" (2007, p. 5). If the formation of a political view is important to citizens' political engagement, how does it happen?

> What basic conceptions of person and political society, and what ideals of liberty, equality, of justice and citizenship, do citizens initially bring… How do they

[13] The significance of the specific moment in which individuals are engaged in writing or conceptualizing a political topic is what is meant by the use of *context*. The ideas of individuals evolve and transform as the social and historical dimensions of their lives shift. Large changes in socio-historical context can prompt large transitions in individuals' ideas, and be the impetus for new ones. One example is the perceptible shift in Malcolm X's philosophy on racial justice in the United States (X, 1965). Changes in Malcolm X's perception of whites in relation to racism and economy parallel shifts in his life experiences tied to the passage of time and the changing of his social context (from Harlem streets, to prison, to the Nation of Islam, to a pilgrimage to Mecca, and so on).

> become attached to those conceptions and ideals […] In what way do they learn about government and what view of it do they acquire? (Rawls, 2007, p. 5)

As part of a political view, justice is constructed by individuals out of their perceptions of their environment. Rawls states two things as making a significant difference to citizens' formation of their political view: "one is the nature of the system in which they grow up; the other is the content of the background culture, how far it acquaints them with democratic political ideas and leads them to reflect on their meaning. The nature of the political system teaches forms of political conduct and political principle" (2007, p. 7). As Rawls suggests, how individuals come to their own, unique understanding of justice can have much to do with how it has been conceived and articulated by others around them, but this study argues that it is also mediated by their individual experiences within that context. Undoubtedly, how society normally functions—its laws and its implicit values about the treatment of individuals—can have a large impact on a person's ideas about justice, but experiences can support and validate those values, or contradict them.

Political philosophy can be seen as a sort of intellectual inheritance—one that has political, social and moral dimensions. Implicit in Rawls's discussion of *background culture* is the recognition that societies have a philosophical and intellectual tradition. There is a heritage of ideas and practices that fundamentally structure the way the society operates. While the ideas of political philosophers (both ancient and modern) have impacted societies' practices as part of their heritage, such ideas do not necessarily deserve a privileged position as being more truthful or universal.

> Political philosophy has no special access to fundamental truths or reasonable ideas, about justice and the common good, or to other basic notions. Its merit, to

> the extent that it has any is that by study and reflection it may elaborate deeper and more instructive conceptions of basic political ideas that help us to clarify our judgments about the institutions and policies of a democratic regime (Rawls, 2007, p. 1).

We can study the *exemplars* of political philosophy—"those noted figures who have made cherished attempts" at intellectualizing the relationship between humans and the forging of social contracts—for the purpose of trying to learn from them, "and if we are lucky to find a way to go beyond them" (Freeman, 2007, p. xiv). [14] The promise or merit of political philosophy is in its ability to help us think beyond our current systems of governance. At its best, political philosophy enables us to imagine something better—leading to greater justice.[15] Included in this discussion are the ideas of Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Karl Marx. John Rawls's thoughts about the purpose of political philosophy, the impact of the above-mentioned philosophers on how justice is conceived, and the definition of justice in a modern context, as *fairness*, will continue to greatly influence this discussion.

Thomas Hobbes

Thomas Hobbes is credited with beginning modern moral and political philosophy with his writing of *Leviathan (1651)*, deemed by some as "the greatest singe work of political thought in the English language" (Rawls, 2007, p. 23); Hobbes finished the text in 1651 shortly after the conclusion of the English Civil War (Rawls, 2007). *Leviathan*

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[14] The meaning and usage of "social contract" as a notion in political philosophy will be further explored in the section on Thomas Hobbes and John Rawls.

[15] The later section on John Rawls touches upon his argument for why political philosophy is pertinent to the conceptualizing of justice and the formation of a democratic society.

"clearly reflects its particular historical context" in that "Hobbes's conclusions were certainly influenced by his recent experience of the social upheaval and conflict of the French Wars of Religion and the English Civil War" (Pike, 2000, p. 68). Throughout the text, he expresses a keen interest in both human nature (through "his science of man") and the difficulties inherent in forming a social contract. There within, Hobbes's conceiving of morality and equality greatly impacts a discussion of justice—particularly his exploration of people's differing perceptions of what is true, what is moral, and what is good. No doubt, having long witnessed the civil unrest and violence over political power and ideals spurred Hobbes's pursuit of answering questions around the sustainability of governance. Hobbes's observations about the fragility of peaceful societies likely drove his desire to unpack the differences in people's perceptions of morality and civility, and why such differences manifested in bloodshed.

Morality: Hobbes explored the differences in what humans believe about their world and the cause for such differences. What accounts for variation in what individuals recognize as good? Hobbes defined good and evil, not by a universal measure common in Christian doctrine, but by how an individual perceived what is *desirable* (good) versus what should be *averted* (evil). Because good and evil lose their religious connotation in Hobbes's theorizing, many argued he was an atheist (Pike, 2000; Rawls, 2007). While this is contested, and it is important to note that Hobbes does refer to "God" within *Leviathan* (1651/1989, p. 232), it is clear Hobbes deviates from the common religious usage of the two terms by defining what should be averted as measured against a fear of death, verses a fear of God or being immoral (Pike, 2000, p. 70). Most importantly, we can extract from Hobbes, an understanding that what is good and what is evil are things

individuals learn through experience. Good and evil are not naturally or universally known, but defined through one's understanding of his/her environment over time. Despite disagreement in what people believe to be true (about what is good and evil), Hobbes wanted to know: What might be universal in how all people experience their world? While Hobbes didn't believe in consistency in what people recognized as good or evil, he did appear to believe there was something common in the way people came to this understanding. In short, there was some degree of universality in the human process for recognizing what is good and evil. Hobbes considered the grounds upon which another person "does *think opine, reason, hope, fear*" (see quotation below). His deep curiosity about human nature is evident in his reflective writing and assertion of the worth of being "a reader of men" by reading thyself. For Hobbes, the resulting knowledge that comes from such reflection, and turning inward to examine one's own reason and beliefs, holds more weight than knowledge acquired by other means.

> …[T]here is a saying much usurped of late, that *wisdom* is acquired, not by reading of *books*, but of *men*… But there is another saying not of late understood, by which they [men] might learn truly to read one another, if they would take the pains; that is *nosce teipsum*, read *thyself*…[in order] to teach us, that for the similitude of the thoughts and passions of one man, to the thoughts and passions of another, whosever looketh into himself, and considerieth what he doth, when he does *think, opine, reason, hope, fear, & c.* and upon what grounds; he shall thereby read and know, what are the thoughts and passions of all other men upon the like occasions. I say the similitude of passions, which are the same in all men, *desire, fear, hope & c*. (1651, p.232).

A general interest in the nature of human beings, and an intense desire to understand what motivates their interaction with one another, seems to prompt Hobbes's discussion of social contracts nearly as much as his aim to identify the means by which peace is achieved and sustained.

Self-Reflection: Hobbes discussed comprehensively the importance of self-reflection. It was aimed at developing a kind of empathy, which allows for understanding others' motivations or the reading of mankind (1651/1989, p. 23). This empathy was clearly for the purpose of better reasoning verses the development of a sense of compassion. The intended outcome of understanding the passions of humanity and what motivates them was the rationale "that all have a sufficient reason based on their own self-preservation and fundamental interests to enter into a covenant" (Rawls, 2001, p. 32). Hobbes purposed the development of an intellectual empathy, not a moral one. He wanted to explicate how possessing a particular intellectual disposition—a dispassionate rationale—could lead to positive participation in civil society under the rule of a sovereign power.

Equality: In *Leviathan*, Hobbes argues that all *men* are created relatively equal to one another when taking into account the summation of their being (Rawls, 2007, p. 35). Therefore, they all have the capacity to engage in public life and, understandably, all have equitable aspirations for their worldly gain.[16] Cynically, Hobbes believed that equality amongst men bred a reckless competition among them, a sort of absence of morality in which nothing is unjust; he called this "a state of war". For this reason, Hobbes claimed a social contract (roughly meaning a formal agreement amongst individuals within a society) must be powerfully enforced by a strong sovereign or the

[16] It is unclear in Hobbes's usage of *men* if he was using the term to exclude all women from the statement, or alternatively, if he was defaulting to the masculine pronoun as often has been the custom in English language usage; while the latter has been seen as sexist, it does not convey the intention of excluding women from the content of the statement. See Pike (2000) for a lengthier discussion of the gender dimensions of Hobbes's discussion of human nature.

alternative will be anarchy (Rawls, 2007). An authoritative ruler was necessary, according to Hobbes, for the maintenance of social harmony.[17]

According to Hobbes, equality among people does not originate from the erection of a just social order. Rather, it is a result of nature itself; "when all is reckoned together, the difference between man, and man, is not so considerable, as that one man can thereupon claim to himself any benefit, to which another may not pretend" (1651/1989, p. 252). More or less, all *men* are given the same faculties of body and mind by nature and, therefore, are led to have similarly high aspirations for a prosperous life. Moreover, since individuals possess equitable qualities; no one truly has a natural ability, predisposition, or entitlement to more of the world than others. Hobbes believes *the experience of living* bestows upon individuals a similar *value* even if it yields very dissimilar viewpoints.

> And as to the faculties of mind…I find yet a greater equality amongst men, than that of [physical] strength. For prudence, is but experience; which equal time, equally bestows on all men, in those things they equally apply themselves unto. That which may perhaps make such equality incredible is but a vain conceit of one's own wisdom, which almost all men think they have in greater degree...they will hardly believe there be many so wise as themselves (1651/1989, p. 252).

[17] Pike provides a helpful summary of Hobbes's logic with regards to a strong authority. Within it, Pike alludes to Hobbes's view of a rational disposition, characterized by the recognition that it is in one's best interest to hand power over to the sovereign. "When we live together in the absence of a common power, each of us continually fights against everyone else (Chapter XIII). This shows us that, to keep the peace, we require an overall power stronger than any one of us. So it is reasonable to agree together to hand over our power to a powerful sovereign (Chapter XIV). Under these circumstances, but not before it is appropriate for us to behave morally towards one another" (2000, p.70).

Interestingly, while Hobbes asserts the equality of men in their creation, he also highlights that they loathe recognizing this reality. Men will, by their very nature, assert their own perspective (wisdom) and merit as greater.

Self-Interest: We can come to understand through a reading of Hobbes's *Leviathan* that people desire to attain things for their own benefit. As Rawls notes, Hobbes's depiction of human beings is "radically individualist", "self-centered", "self-focused" and with "a liability to pride and vainglory which association with others arouses and which is irrational" (2007, p.36). People are unlikely to recognize others' rights to equal benefits, which perpetually impacts their relations with one another. In fact, this gap between actual equality in the value of all people and perceived inequality in the value of others is a paramount claim made by Hobbes regarding the selfish nature of humanity. In Hobbes' world, human interaction is seemingly colored by a sense of entitlement because of this steadfast belief in one's superiority. While Hobbes asserts that men are in fact equal, he has little faith in their ability to treat each other equally without strong incentive (i.e. political power, coercion by the state). The implication for justice is that individuals cannot be left in absolute freedom or liberty, without strong laws or cause to promote equality.

Despite the cynicism of Hobbes' beliefs about human nature and governance, his observations did lead him to conclusions that align with some commonly-held principles of social justice. One is the foundational belief in the inherent equality of men that leads to an assertion that social contracts should ensure equal basic rights. This study recognizes the social and historical limitations in which Hobbes wrote *Leviathan,* acknowledging his ideas regarding equality would (in today's context) require translation

to explicitly include individuals of any racial, ethnic, sexual or gender identity. In addition to equality, Hobbes implicitly supported plurality and the need for self-reflection to peacefully allow for its existence. He advocated for the importance of individual reflection in the achievement of a just and harmonious society. He perceived one's dissection of his/her own beliefs & motives in context of others as significant to political engagement. Hobbes inferred that life experience was a significant variable in how one perceived the world, defined morality, and identified what was good or just within it. This implicit support for plurality lays a good foundation for discussion of Locke's conceptualization of tolerance.

John Locke

In *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, written in 1689, John Locke advocates for secularism—for the existence and function of government institutions outside of religion (1947, p. 35). In making his argument for why secularism is important, Locke highlights two themes of significance to a discussion of justice: *tolerance* and *limits of political and religious power*. On the topic of tolerance, Locke states that individuals' positions on virtue, truth and matters of faith vary and, consequently, tolerance becomes a necessary base for a humane, functioning society in the face of difference. Building upon his discussion of tolerance, Locke asserts that no political office has the right to dictate faith to individuals, and furthermore, no political or religious position justifies the persecution of people on the basis of faith or religious practice (1947). Locke's discussion has implications for both the citizenry of a commonwealth and those in positions of authority within the church and state. He describes a disposition of tolerance that citizens must adopt in relation to one another for the establishment of a just society, but he also outlines

the limitations of religious and political authority in dictating how people think and live their private lives. Locke's perspective about individuals', institutions' and states' responsibilities for maintaining a tolerant society potentially has informed current discussion of tolerance as a platform for securing civil or human rights (in confronting hatred, genocide, etc.). Tolerance suggests the necessity and right to a social or political agreement that bridges a lack of deeper acceptance or compassion on the plains of culture, morality, or identity. Such an agreement assures basic security and rights, and freedom from persecution, in the face of holding unpopular beliefs, engaging in particular ethnic or cultural practices, or occupying a minority identity.

Individual Beliefs & Tolerance: While Locke fell short of articulating that faith, virtue, or moral code was something *constructed* by each individual out of his/her environment or experiences, he clearly recognized and legitimized the individuality of each person's faith and perspective on morality (1947, p. 21). Locke's push for tolerance in civil society is noticeably based on Christianity; he used Christian principles (such as charity) to make his distinctive argument for tolerance. Interestingly, Locke was heavily influenced by the Christian religious thought of his time but also deviated from many dominant ideas about the legitimacy of enforcing Christian beliefs through governance. Evident in *A Letter Concerning Toleration* was that tolerance was the most important measure of Christianity in Locke's eyes; even so, Locke strengthens his argument for a tolerant disposition in civil society by calling upon other Christian "values of charity, meekness and good will toward all mankind".

> … I esteem that toleration to be the chief characteristic mark of the true Church. For whatsoever some people boast of the antiquity of places and names, of the

> pomp of their outward worship; others, of the reformation of their discipline; all, of the orthodoxy of their faith—for everyone is orthodox to himself—these things, and all others of this nature, are much rather marks of men striving for power and empire over one another than of the Church of Christ. Let anyone have never so true a claim to all these things, yet if he be destitute of charity, meekness, and good will in general terms towards all mankind, even to those that are not Christians, he is certainly yet short of being a true Christian himself (1947, p. 21)

Locke's understanding that all people believe in the merits of their own ideas is a captivating premise for tolerance. Granting individuals their right to express and live out differing beliefs presents a deep social and political challenge. People believe in the righteousness of their own point of view and yet these markers of belief, according to Locke, lead to "men striving for power and empire over one another". In opposition to Hobbes's strong government, tolerance was the collective resolution Locke devised to allow for the expression of difference while maintaining social harmony and cohesion: "how great would be the fruit, both in Church and State, if the pulpits everywhere sounded with this doctrine of peace and toleration" (1947, p. 35). Locke's call for tolerance went well beyond the custom of political and religious entities of his time; he argued citizens should be free of moral dictation; accordingly, Locke charged powerful institutions to insist on tolerance. Making it plain, Locke feels that the "natural liberty" of man is to be free from any "superior" person or group or system of government. As long as mankind preserves a sense of freedom in society, peace will triumph among human beings.

Secularism & Limits of Power: Locke is well-known for the secularism of his ideas with regard to state power. He wanted the Church's power as a political entity to be limited, particularly in its ability to deprive individuals of their civil rights and property. "No man…with whatsoever ecclesiastical office he be dignified, can deprive another man that is not of his church and faith either of liberty or of any part of his worldly goods upon the account of that difference between them in religion" (1947, p. 35). According to Locke, the church not only had an obligation to preach tolerance, but should within its own realm of appropriate influence (similar to the state) ensure the basic protections of all people (1947). He insisted no religious figure or entity had the right to deprive individuals of their basic human rights under the state because church access to political power would suggest an illegitimate use of state sovereignty.

Locke conceived of a just society in terms of *religious* tolerance due to the social and political struggles of his time. He believed individuals should be governed by *consent* and judged the Church's intrusion into civil affairs as a barrier to the establishment of a just commonwealth. Locke's conclusions regarding the necessity of secular governance and of tolerance for religious difference (in relationship to basic civil rights under the state) are relevant in modern U.S. society. Our *background culture* (to borrow Rawls' term) permeates with this idea of a division between religious practice and state practice. Tolerance is an influential ideal in terms of justice more generally. Locke implies that human or civil rights should not be arbitrarily taken or systemically withheld because of religious faith, which is a marker of identity. In light of Locke's affirmation of the equality of *men*, couldn't this concept of tolerance be significant for

more current discussions centered on civil rights and other aspects of identity that have social and political impact like race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, class and nationality?[18]

In *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, Locke suggests individuals should have a high level of self-determination within civil society through his advocating for their right to believe what they choose, which Rawls describes as the *freedom of thought* and *liberty of conscience* (Rawls, 2007, p. 44). Locke states: "Men being, as has been said, by Nature, all free, equal and independent, no one can be…subjected to the Political Power of another without his own *Consent*" (Locke, 1679 as quoted in Rawls, 2007, p. 124). In his *Second Treatise* (1679), Locke proposes that individuals should be ruled by *consent,* meaning they freely choose to be under the governing power of a legitimate regime that treats them equally (Rawls, 2007). Self-determination and equality are also significant themes within the work of Karl Marx and his vision for a *true democracy*.

Karl Marx

Karl Marx, known as the father of socialism or "patron saint of communism", is arguably the most influential and controversial of modern political philosophers (Mothlabi, 1999, p. 222). His lengthy body of work (with Friedrich Engels)—*The German Ideology*, *The Poverty of Philosophy*, *Communist Manifesto*, *Capital* and so on—is prolifically written about, dissected, and referenced.[19] This is such the case that it

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[18] While the logic of Locke's argument for tolerance could be extended to an acceptance of various gender identities, Locke, at the time, did not include women in his conceptualizing of individuals as equal. Rawls references Susan Orkin's *Women in Western Political Thought* (1979) to acknowledge that Locke was selective in his inclusion of women in his political philosophizing around rights and the freedom of belief. "There is no idea of even considering whether women have equal political rights" (Rawls, 2007, p. 127).

[19] Friedrich Engels was a co-author, collaborator and editor on several of Marx's most famous texts. Yet, Marx is the man of the two "now universally acknowledged" as

is nearly impossible to make summary statements regarding Marx's ideas, which will satisfy any great number of people. Rawls confessed in his own analysis of Marx:

> Marx's thought is enormous in scope, and it presents tremendous difficulties. To understand, much less to master, the ideas of *Capital*—all three volumes—is itself a forbidding task. Still, it is much better to discuss Marx, if only briefly, than not to discuss him at all (2007, p. 320).

This study, therefore, endeavors to briefly discuss Marx. Rather than deeply probing one or two of his ideas, this exploration paints, in very broad strokes, several of his ideas that have been appropriated and, thereby, contributed to a *background culture* of justice in the United States. In particular, Marx's critique of capitalism (*division of labor*, *inequality* and *alienation*), conceptualization of oppression, theory of history, view of democracy, and the legacy of his work is described.

Locke's & Hobbes's philosophies include limited discussion of the economic ideals; they (by comparison to Marx) focus on the social, moral and political dimensions of governance and human co-existence.[20] Alternatively, it has been argued that Marx

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"capitalism's most insightful philosopher" while (according to some) "the role of his lifelong friend and ideological ally Friedrich Engels has been airbrushed from history" (Hunt, 2009, p. 48). Why is "the co-author of The Communist Manifesto, cofounder of Marxism and architect of much of modernism socialism…nowhere to be seen in this shower of admiration" (Hunt, 2009, p. 48)? Rawls offers some insight, describing Marx as "a self-taught, isolated scholar" and that "Friedrich Engels, who was a close associate and collaborator…who was in some ways indispensable to Marx, was not an original thinker of Marx's caliber, and could not really give him the kind of intellectual help he could have used (2007, p. 319). Engels himself acknowledged, 'What I contributed […] Marx could have very well done without me. What Marx accomplished, I would have not have achieved […]Marx was a genius; we others were at best talented' "(Rawls, 2007, p. 319).

[20] Locke discussed private property. Hobbes explored competition. However, neither of them came close to systematically analyzing the material or economic ways of society in the same manner or depth as Marx. Neither Locke nor Hobbes explores the concepts of

was interested preeminently in the material aspects of human life and interaction.[21] To be exact, Marx focused on the products of human labor in the context of capitalism.[22] He endeavored to expose how capitalism, as a labor system, structured individuals' liberty and dictated their quality of life within industrializing societies. In capitalism, Marx contended how an economy that unequally structured and valued labor for the purpose of *profit* was irreparably exploitive and inevitably led to a social and political system dependent on inequality.

Division of Labor, Inequality and Alienation: Marx discusses how capitalism fosters a division of labor into specializations, which segregates the production process into unfinished, repetitive motions that liken men to machinery. Marx conceives this to be extremely detrimental—that such division *impoverishes* the worker and *brutalizes* him (Marx & Engels, 2003). His view is that the individual in his repetitious labor does not ultimately produce anything but capital for the capitalist; this alienates the laborer from his own work. Marx accuses capitalism "of dehumanising human beings…undermining

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production, labor or economy as they are defined by Marx. They do not expand upon how such concepts impact human relations or the formation of society. In this manner, Marx is distinct amongst the scholars discussed within this study and unique amongst nineteenth century political philosophers more generally.

[21] Discussions regarding Marx's *scientism* and *positivism* often focus upon the materialist aspects of Marxism and some have argued, that Marxism ignores the social, moral and cultural aspects of human relations and political power. However, others see Marx, to varying degrees, as giving primacy to material relations in his analysis while still having a clear interest in both the social and moral dimensions of humanity (Carling, 2006). See Mathlabi (1999) for a comprehensive discussion of Marxism implicit theory of morality, which undermines strict materialist interpretations of Marx's political philosophy and theory of history.

[22] The notion of *production*, the *system of* and *products from* human labor, is an essential part of Marxian philosophy and is the foundation for Marx's and Engels's analysis of capitalism.

their autonomy. The system of capitalism, he cried out, alienated, robbed, exploited and made human beings miserable, while the bourgeois capitalists themselves lived in positions of privilege and power" (Mothlabi, 1999, p. 232). . As a result, the laborer suffers in futility. His work does not increase his ability to better his own life because he is trapped in his class identity and his relationship to production.

According to Marx, the specialization of trade becomes solidified in castes as family members pass on particular skills to successive generations as a means of survival. Here Marx makes an illusion to how social reproduction is related to economic production and the maintenance of privilege across generations.[23] The continuation of trade specializations through generations further solidifies economic inequalities and structurally ensures their perpetuation (via private property, greed and division of labor), which greatly benefits the elite or bourgeois class. Since the lower class laborer (proletariat) does not control the products of his labor (capital), capitalism's division of labor leads to the "pauperization of all classes" (Marx & Engels, 2003, p. 149) except that of the highest members (capitalists) as they control the productive power of all those laboring underneath them. This is Marx's and Engels' summary argument against capitalism.

Marx refers to capitalism as disturbing the *natural* division of labor within societies; "there springs up naturally a division of labour, caused by differences in sex and age, a division that is consequently based on a purely physiological foundation" (Marx & Engels, 2003, p.152). The preferred, *natural* alternative to the capitalist division

[23] See the later section in this study on Marx's *Theory of History* for a discussion of Marx's historical materialism, which accounts for the emergence of classes out of relations (both social and political) structured by an advancing system of production.

of labor reveals a potentially disturbing aspect of Marxism and its *historicity* (its limitation in its applicability to today's sociopolitical context). Marx presumes that divisions along age and sex (gender) as well as race, are biologically motivated in their *naturalness* instead of socially constructed and enforced.[24] With regard to gender and race, some feminists and critical race theorists have recognized this issue within classical Marxist discourse and, subsequently, endeavored to reform it so that Marxist critiques of capitalism can be utilized within a more socially—and culturally—aware framework, sometimes referred to as neo-Marxism or post—Marxism. Neo-Marxist positions, for example, take into account how labor is also divided along race and gender lines and make a point of condemning such divisions while still using class as the focus (to varying degrees) of discussions regarding inequality and oppression.[25]

> In this [today's] historical context, a return to an examination of the relevance of Marx for feminism makes sense […] as long as capitalism remains the dominant mode of production, it is impossible fully to understand the forces that oppress women and shape the relations between men and women without grounding the analysis in Marx's work (Gimenez, 2005, p. 11-12).

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[24] In a chapter on "Radical Pedagogy", the authors of *Education Still under Seige* (1993) explain further the link between Marxism and "the subjugation of women and blacks in American society" through his depiction of "the relationship between nature and labor" (p. 123).

[25] Critical, radical and feminist educators as well as cultural theorists have used and still use Marxist theory as a foundation for their ideas or a lens of analysis in their work. Counted among them are the scholars of the Frankfurt School (Adorno, Horkheimer, and Marcuse) as well as Henry Giroux, Kenneth Saltman, Michael Apple, Paulo Freire, Donaldo Macedo, Noam Chomsky, Howard Zinn, Michel Foucault, and Nancy Fraser.

With regards to a natural labor division as Marx describes, he is alluding to social categorizations (i.e. race, gender) that are as oppressive as class categorizations, and that do not serve as humane guidelines for the division of labor.

Marxian Morality, Socialist Values, Justic e& Oppression: If Marx's view of oppression is seen as seated in *socialist values*, one can understand he is not strictly materialist in his interpretations of human interaction within capitalism. [26] Marx's view of oppression was an analysis of the mechanisms of exploitation within capitalist society and its outcomes. "Marx thinks that once we understand how capitalism works, we will recognize it as a system of exploitation—a system in which labor is made to work for a certain period of time in exchange for nothing (unpaid labor). We will see it as a system based on concealed theft" (Rawls, 2007, p. 353). Capitalism was perceived as particularly oppressive through its inconspicuousness—its concealed theft—which Marx explained as ideological. [27]

> In a capitalist ideology, for instance, capitalist interests are furthered or protected at the expense of proletarian interests; but this is presented in such a way as to appear that the interests of all are served… in Marxist understanding at least, an ideology is basically class-based and also serves the interest of a particular group—usually the bourgeoisie—while claiming or pretending to serve the interests of all. Marx and Engels (1978; 489) have explained this in terms of the

[26] Socialist values are "a distinctive combination of equality, autonomy, community and democracy…" (Carling, 2006, p. 279, citing Carling, 2000).

[27] Marx's discussion of the ideological aspects of capitalism in reproduction of the status quo—particularly through religion and the moralizing of the ruling class—would appear to counter critiques of his work as extremely materialist.

> authority of the ruling class, stating that the 'ruling ideas of each age have ever been the ideas of the ruling class' (Mothlabi, 1999, p. 225).

While Marx began with an examination of the material aspects of people's lives as a basis for understanding social, political and economic interaction, he ultimately had *moral concerns* about how society functioned.[28] These moral concerns fueled his criticism of capitalism as a system of oppression. As Mothlabi notes

> …Marx employs morally significant language to challenge what he regards as the evils of capitalism and their destructive effects on the working class. It becomes clear from all this that capitalism cannot be seen as purely an economic matter. Insofar as it affects the lives and well-being of people, it is also a moral issue and deserves to be judged accordingly (1999, p. 221).

Some of the "morally significant terms" which Mothlabi identifies within Marxist critique are "alienation, exploitation, dehumanisation, inhuman…degradation, domination, slavery…subjugation, brutalisation…despotism, repulsiveness, suffering…depravity, unnatural, cruel, crude, and malignant" (1999, p. 230). Arguably, notions of equality, autonomy and community greatly informed Marx's analysis of capitalism, his subsequent view of oppression, and his vision for a true democracy.

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[28] Some have argued that Marx's ideas had no moral dimension because he intended to be strictly scientific in his analysis and because he largely critiqued morality in conjunction with religion—as "opium of the people" (Mothlabi, 1999, p. 11). However, it seems reasonable to concur with Rawls on this matter: "For certainty, exploitation is a moral concept, and implicitly appeals to principles of justice of some kind", and therefore, there must be more to Marx's purely materialist definition of exploitation; "[o]therwise, it would not have the interest for us that it does" (2007, p.335). Further, "…the concept of exploitation presupposes a conception of right and justice in the light of which basic structures [institutions within society] are judged" (Rawls, 2007, p. 336)

These common socialist values are plausible principles for a Marxian theory of justice though Marx never explicitly stated one.[29]

As mentioned above, Marx critiqued capitalism for its intrinsically hierarchical structuring of human beings and the negative, alienating effects that had on their relations and welfare. Capitalism assigns people unequal value (Marx's equality critique) and, through class, limits their ability to contribute to their own happiness (Marx's alienation critique). Contrarily, Marx asserted that the principle of equality should found the relations of a society—explicitly economic relations. However, this principle of equality extends to all relations in light of the Marxian notion of a dialectical relationship between material relations and social relations. Within his equality critique

> Marx supposes, then, that all members of society equally have a claim, resting on justice, to full access to and the use of society's means of production and natural resources…He assumes also that all of us should fairly share in the work of society…This is why he rejects the legitimacy of private property in the means of production in its distributive role as inconsistent with basic justice (Rawls, 2007, p. 352).

Ultimately, Marx's arguments regarding aspects of economy, such as private property, are reliant upon principles of justice such as equality, which are moral ideals. Marx's alienation critique of capitalism is similarly moral because within it he asserts "…that there is something inherently objectionable about market relationships, because they tend to undermine reciprocity, specialize activities inappropriately, distort personal objectives,

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[29] "The answer I suggest…is that Marx did condemn capitalism as unjust. On the other hand, he did not see himself as doing so." (Rawls, 2007, p. 336). Rawls takes pains to lay out Marx's (unstated) normative view of justice (2007).

create false needs, fragment inter-personal relationships, encourage instrumental attitudes, and promote self-serving behavior" (Carling, 2006, p.293). Thus, embedded in Marx's alienation critique is the link between justice and principles of equality, autonomy and community.

Marxism and socialism uniquely assert values of community and altruism as necessary components for a just society. Socialists' promotion of community "involves practices of reciprocity, in the context of social relationships that are 'direct' and 'many-sided'" (Carling, 2006, p. 287, citing Taylor, 1982, pp. 25-33). By "direct", Marxism demands that social relations should be free from the use of ideology to legitimize inequality, and in being "many-sided", they do not mirror the selfish, one-dimensional and instrumentalized ways in which Marx saw capitalism structuring human interaction. Within a society, communal practices of a reciprocal nature are reliant upon a certain mentality "…in the form of a generally altruistic attitude towards co-inhabitants of the planet, and a disposition of care." (Carling, 2006, p. 287). An altruistic attitude, which sometimes referred to as Marx's humanism, is a necessary basis for people to willingly uphold egalitarianism absent of state coercion. The Marxian belief in the possibility of a society built upon reciprocity—"a human solidarity…guided by mutual concern and respect"—has been characterized as utopian (Mothlabi, 1999, p. 231). While socialist values of community and altruism "certainly go beyond liberalism…they are not necessarily inconsistent with it" (Carling, 2006, p. 287). Marx evenly valued individuals' rights to self-determination and their commitment to community, which he suggested should be voluntary. This tension between self-determination and community is further explored, though not resolved, in the latter section on Marx's true democracy.

While it is commonly held that Marx's view on morality was paradoxical, there is something implicitly moral in his criticism of capitalism and his view of oppression, which "leads to conclusions that he, and subsequently his followers, had a specific moral point of view" (Mothlabi, 1999, p. 229). This moral point of view is closely aligned with modern socialist values and ideally leads to political practices characterized by reciprocity and egalitarianism. These socialist values could also be construed as Marxian principles of justice.

> It follows that for Marx morality, as a tool of human practice (human behaviour), implicitly had a great role to play in bringing about the required changes in the human condition…In relating morality and moral principles to their historical and material settings, Marx believed that only a combination of socialist theory and practice could ultimately lead to a superior type of human morality (Mothlabi, 1999, p. 231).

Marxism is marked by a belief in the relationship between theory (particularly, consciousness) and practice (political action, revolution). Marx specifically saw consciousness around class issues and revolution as historically and materially determined—the environment providing the context for human action.

Theory of history: The famous first line of *The Communist Manifesto* is: "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles" (Marx & Engels, 1978/1872, p. 473). There is probably no greater indicator of the aim of Marx's scholarship, which was to unpack the reasons, and moreover, the mechanisms for material inequality through a study and accounting of history. Marx perceived this study as explaining the present social and political dilemma around industrialization and the

surfacing of capitalism. Marx developed a general theory of history—*historical materialism*—that accounted for the emergence of systematic inequality through classes. The proletariat and bourgeois class division was bore out of relations structured by an advancing system of production. Materialism is described as regarding "man and his activities as the starting point for explaining his thought about the world rather than vice versa" (Edwards, 2007, p.143). Marx's historical materialism is described as "a force of technological determinism where forms of society rise and fall according to the level of development of the productive forces" (Edwards, 2007, p. 144). However, at times, Marx appears to give more priority "in historical change not to productive forces but the relations of production or in other words to the relationship between different socioeconomic classes" (Edwards, 2007, p.144). This differentiation between whether Marx is giving primacy to material production itself or to the way material production structures social relations, which suggests an emphasis on the importance of social relations in the reproduction of class (and other) inequalities, is a significant point to many scholars.

Without dismissing the importance of the details of Marx's theory of history, or the issues with its interpretation and application to political practice, this study endeavors to not get mired in them.[30] There is worth in gaining a less complicated understanding of

[30] Edwards notes that, while these finer points amongst scholars might be of merit, they are not likely the way in which Marx intended his ideas to be interpreted, especially in their absolutism. "This is not a minor point: in the Marxist tradition the interpretation of historical materialism in terms of the primacy of either the forces or relations has had a significant impact on political practice. Yet it was most likely not Marx's intention to assert the systematic primacy of productive forces over the relations or vice-versa. Forms of technology appear in a dialectical relationship to the organisation of the relations of production, so that they are at times compatible and contradictory" (Edwards, 2007, 145).

how Marx's theory of history has more broadly been appropriated by others and influenced their thoughts. No doubt, Marx's historical materialism is constantly being translated and reinterpreted, defended and newly criticized. As Carling notes, "…the Marxian theory of history is still a live project…" (2006, p. 277). But, how has it generally (in making a sustained case for the detrimental impact of capitalism on public life and individual well-being) served as a model for scholars and influenced socialist political practice (Carling, 2006, p. 275)? Using historical materialism as an orthodox or not so orthodox model, Marxist scholars distinguish laws of historical development "to seek out their manifestation in particular kinds of social and political arrangements" (Edwards, 2007, p. 134). One example is radical (or critical) theorists have used the notion of having a privileged perspective on the unfolding of history, and privileged place within its unfolding, to argue for new translations of the historical record and new meanings for human events.[31] Important to the redemptive power within class-based revolution is Marx's notion of men's capacity to *make* history. Particularly, Marx argues the proletariat class possesses this privileged point of view on history and therefore, occupies a unique position to change its course. This ability to *make* history seemingly conflicts with deterministic interpretations of Marx that suggest the unfolding of human events is strictly fated. While human beings may not choose the social and historical

[31] Paulo Freire is a noteworthy example in the field of education. His work in adult education with Afro-Brazilians was centered on raising their consciousness through a study of their identity and position within the unfolding of history. Through such study they would recognize their own agency in history's making. Freire believed that a pedagogy focused on exposing Afro-Brazilians to their complacency in their own past exploitation would empower them. Through exposing to them the mechanisms by which they were previously exploited, Freire saw Afro-Brazilians as having the capacity to resist their present exploitation, and therefore change the course of their own history (1970, 1974).

context thrust upon them, do they not possess the capacity to mediate them and bring about change? This study argues that Marx indeed saw this capacity in the proletariat class and, furthermore, saw it as their humanistic mission to do so. His reasoning led to a belief in revolution, while recognizing toward the end of his life, that the forces of capitalism were more subversive than he had previously thought.[32]

> …Marx came to see the growing complexity and power of capitalism… Capitalism's resilience against itself is something of which Marx was increasingly aware. It had been able to avert revolution by adapting. But this adaption had been carried out politically and ideologically, dampening down class conflict by providing material and spiritual comforts to the industrial working class that made commitment to the revolution seem risky or even unnecessary and dangerous (Edwards, 2007, p. 152).

With the passage of time, Marx's work signified a shifting in ideas about the immediate outcome of human action while maintaining a hope that people retained capacity to alter their course.

Debatably, the greatest lasting impact of Marx's historical materialism is two-fold: as an exemplar of how history can be used to found a discussion of social and political relations, and in its affirmation that history does not befall human beings but that they actively create history (described sometimes as having *agency*) through their relations. Marx uses the history of relations and systems to make an argument for the trajectory of social and political life—an approach to history that has subsequently

[32] Great disillusionment has been expressed as a result of the rigidity surrounding Marxist values "since 'history has shredded the predictions' that gave Marxists confidence in the inevitability of equality, especially those concerning 'the rise of the organized working class" (Carling, 2006, p. 290)

become central to the radical intellectual tradition. While some have discredited Marx's theory of history as determinist and challenged its importance because his trajectory toward revolution has proven to be false (at least in the time frame Marx envisioned), Carling argues Marx's theory of history has not been disproven: "Roughly speaking, the macroscopic historical correlations appear to favor the theory (or, at least, do not disfavor it) but it remains less clear what mechanisms of social change make the theory true, if it is true" (2006, p. 277). To argue whether Marx's theory of history is true, and by what mechanisms, is beyond the scope of this study. It is more modestly being argued here that Marx's theory of history, amongst his other ideas, was unique, transformative within political thought, and has been extremely influential the world over.

Democracy: The work of Karl Marx has historically been met with strong opposition in the United States for being anti-democratic in its advancement of communism and socialist values.

> In America, often referred to as the greatest democracy on earth, not only was the so-called McCarthy era notorious for the way it dealt with people suspected of being communists or having connections with communism, but wars have been fought against communist countries in defence of the so-called free world… In almost every non-communist country in the world communism has been regarded as a threat to the established order… In short, communism, as a system advocated by Marxism, is largely something known as something to avoid and not to be involved with. What many ordinary people know about communism is largely what they learn through anti-communist state propaganda (Mothlabi, 1999, p. 222).

Regardless of this reputation, Marx was plausibly pro-democracy while simultaneously being opposed to a capitalist form of economy. To Marx, communism was aligned with *true democracy* in "the sense that a communist society would be one where people had immediate control over their conditions of existence and their relations with others" (Edwards, 2007, p. 144). In this way, Marx's conceptualization of democracy can be described as an *anti-system*, a way of being that had immense liberty.

> [I]t is clear that he [Marx] was not using it [democracy] to denote either classical republican democracy or modern representative democracy. Rather, by "democracy" Marx means something like the very absence of political power, a condition in which each and all have full control over their conditions of existence and their relationships with others (Edwards, 2007, p. 140).

For Marx, democracy is the absence of a system that dictates and structures the relations of one individual with another. *Self-Determinism* or autonomy is taken up by Marx as an important aspect of justice and a goal for any legislative or governing body. Marx said: "Man does not exist for the law but rather the law for the good of the man; it [democracy] is *human existence*, while in others [forms of government] man has only legal existence…" (Marx, in *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, 1843 cited in Edwards, 2007, p. 142). What differentiates Marx's true democracy from more common liberal conceptualizations? It would seem the temperance of individual liberty with the socialist values of community and altruism that deter the accumulation of power (signified in capital) in order to dominate others. Marxist values push reciprocity (as previously mentioned) and a commitment to equality without the necessity of legislation or a constitution, enforced by state power.

Legacy: Marx's demonization of capitalism in the face of industrialization and rapid modernization in Europe and the United States stands out as a rare and lingering dissention.

> Of much greater importance in grasping the radicalism of Marx's thought is the recognition of his laying bare the interconnections between economic and political power in modern capitalist societies. More than any other thinker at this time, it was Marx who exposed these relations and in doing so formed a body of knowledge that was central for the trajectory of radical politics in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Edwards, 2007, p. 140).

While many economists and politicians celebrated the benefits of labor division and the development of manufacturing, Marx highlighted its propensity for marginalizing the masses and widening economic inequities.[33] Marx's contributions to modern conceptualizations of justice are largely in context of how *systems* (or superstructures) can be unjust—through his "laying bare the interconnections between economic and political power". Marx offers a view of *oppression* that moves beyond how individuals act against each other in an unjust manner to focus on how a system can structure individual action, and be the root of injustice and the vehicle for its perpetuation.

Marx unmistakably lays a foundation for exploring notions of justice in relation to economics. Rawls notes: "Given the circumstances of Marx's life, his achievement as an economic theorist and political sociologist of capitalism is extraordinary, indeed heroic" (2007, p. 319). Subsequent forays into this relationship throughout contemporary social

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[33] Preceding Marx by a few decades, Alexander Hamilton's perception of the value of manufacturing and the advancement of capitalism is quite the opposite of Marx and Engels (2003). *The Poverty of Philosophy* (1847) is written in criticism of the economic theories of Marx's contemporaries.

and political texts call for the end to *economic injustice.* In this manner, the legacy of Marxist thought in the work of economists, social and political theorists, and educators is unspeakably profound (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1993, p. 111). Marx's conceptualization of capitalism as an economic system that unjustly structures human relations has had lasting significance. Even though his work has been substantively critiqued, "Marx's intellectual power and vitality remain undiminished, as demonstrated in the extent to which even scholars who reject it must grapple with his work's challenge, so much so that their theories are shaped by the very process of negating it" (Gimenez, 2005, p. 12). Marx's critique of capitalism's unequal valuing of human labor as fundamentally antithetical to the existence of an equitable society has essentially impacted arguments for economic justice. However, some believing in his ideas have become disenchanted.

> The very continuation of the Marxian project, whether in the analytical idiom or otherwise, remains therefore an open question, which I approach with a good deal of personal frustration, if not quite yet despair. These feelings arise from two deeply opposed but equally powerful perceptions: a) that the human need to continue in some form the Marxian project of confronting capitalism has never been stronger; and that the historical prospects for such a development have rarely been weaker (Carling, 2006, p. 278).

Marxist thought continues to push the importance of evaluating justice as socially, politically and economically interrelated.

John Rawls

"The post-Rawls development of political philosophy has enormously clarified, and thereby strengthened, our grasp of social justice principles." (Carling, 2006, p. 279).

Rawls is credited with reviving political philosophy in his articulation of its importance to civic engagement and the preservation of basic liberties in modern democratic societies. He stated that political philosophy had 4 primary roles: 1) a *practical one* of mediation in that it helps us settle the problem of divisive conflict through (hopefully) uncovering some "underlying basis of philosophical and moral agreement"; 2) one of *political orientation* in that it "may contribute to how people think of their political and social institutions as a whole, and their basic aims and purposes as a society with a history…"; 3) one of *reconciliation* in that political philosophy might enable us as individuals, when confronted with rage and disenchantment, to understand our society and its institutions in a broader context thereby leading us to acceptance and to "affirm our social world positively"; 4) one of *reasonable pluralism* in that political philosophy can lead us to be "realistically utopian" in that we see it "as probing the limits of practicable political possibility" in our current social and political context (2001, p. 2-4). The researcher relies upon the work of Rawls in this study as not only a philosopher in his own right with "the publication of his monumental work *A Theory of Justice*" in 1971, but also as a scholar in his interpretations of the above-mentioned political theorists, and how their ideas impact our background culture (Arneson, 2007, p. 391).[34]

Analysis of Political Philosophy: Rawls articulates the need for both generosity and empathy in the analysis of other philosophers' work. In recognizing the historical limitations and particularities of the social context in which they wrote, Rawls argues that scholars and citizens should not let some details derail or devalue their analysis. In

[34] John Rawls taught at Harvard University a course on Modern Political Philosophy until his retirement in 1995 and refined his understanding and instruction of many political philosophers over his tenure (Freeman, 2007, ix). See Rawls, J. (2007). *Lectures on the History of Political Philosophy* (S. Freeman, Ed.). Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

illuminating the limitations caused by context on the possible philosophical conclusions of theorists, Rawls states: "I often cited the remark of Collingwood in his *An Autobiography*, to the effect that the history of political philosophy is not that of a series of answers to the same question, but a series of answers to different questions" (Excerpt from *Some Remarks About My Teaching*, 1993, quoted in Freeman, 2007,p.xiii of Foreward). Despite these limitations, Rawls suggests people can glean what is most profound from political philosophers' texts and appropriate it to further develop their understandings of justice in a modern society. Rawls hypothesized these handful of political philosophy texts that endure do so due to their "unusually systematic and complete statements of fundamental democratic" principles (Rawls, 2007, p. 2-3). He remarks about his approach to the texts of political philosophers:

> In talking about these people I always tried to do two things especially. One thing was to pose their philosophical problems as they saw them, given what their understanding of the state of moral and political philosophy then was… I saw each writer contributing to the development of doctrines supporting democratic thought, and this included Marx whom I always discussed in the political philosophy course. Another thing I tried to do was to present each writer's thought in what I took to be its strongest form…I didn't say, not intentionally anyway, what to my mind they should have said, but what they did say, supported by what I viewed as the most reasonable interpretation of their text (Excerpt from *Some Remarks About My Teaching*, 1993, quoted in Freeman, 2007, p. xiii)

Rawls interpreted the work of Hobbes, Locke and Marx with an open-mindedness that gave them all respect for their contributions to our background culture and its

conceptions of justice.[35] According to Rawls, citizens owe their understanding of the complexities of forming a social contract in part to the legacy of Hobbes's and Locke's work. Tolerance is recognized as necessary in coping with a multiplicity of identities and belief systems within society, and that one must have liberty of conscience and the right to resist an illegitimate government because Locke endeavored to say so (Rawls, 2001). It is argued that structuring human productivity under an economic system for our joint ascendance is important, but simultaneously retaining mindfulness in the utilization of people toward that end is also crucial. Where persons' political dispositions have been impacted by a belief in ensuring that labor is not valued over the well-being or happiness of a nation's people, Marx can be credited for exposing the relationship between these two things. Undeniably, the citizenry of a Western democracy is so oriented in their political view by a background culture that bares the intellectual inheritance received from these philosophers. In the United States, we owe much of our understandings about justice to the insightful thinkers that have struggled over these concepts before, allowing for us to benefit and grow in our knowledge of our collective purpose, meaning, and power.

Justice as Fairness: While recognizing that Rawls as a scholar offered a framework through which to read political philosophy, he was equally a philosopher in

[35] Rawls states further about his analysis: "If I saw a mistake in their arguments, I supposed they [the philosophers] saw it too and must have dealt with it, but where? So I looked for their way out, not mine. Sometimes their way out was historical: in their day the question need not be raised; or wouldn't arise or be fruitfully discussed. Or there was a part of the text I had overlooked, or hadn't read." (Excerpt from *Some Remarks About My Teaching*, 1993, quoted in Freeman, 2007, p. xiii)) Rawls understood the historical limitations inherent in philosophers' writing. As a consequence, even when the philosophers approached their work from a seemingly universal position, Rawls recognized the socio-cultural limitations of their historical moment and did not discredit their ideas where their work portrayed these limitations.

his own right.[36] Rawls developed a conception of justice as *fairness*, which is summarized in the following manner.

> According to justice as fairness, the most reasonable principles of justice are those that would be the object of mutual agreement by persons under fair conditions. Justice as fairness thus develops a theory of justice from the idea of a social contract. The principles it articulates affirm a broadly liberal conception of basic rights and liberties, and only permit inequalities in wealth and income that would be to the advantage of the least well off (Kelly, 2001, p. xi).

Departing from Marx's work as embedded in the history and society of a particular moment (industrialization across Europe), Rawls returns to the notion of a social contract and the creation of it within ideal, hypothetical conditions that can reveal some of the principal aspects of justice within a modern democratic society.[37] Benefiting from the ideals of previous philosophers Rawls pushes forward with a non-historical conceptualization of the social contract as an amenable, reciprocal and amongst individuals with shared democratic ideals.

The preconditions and limitations that Rawls articulated in his conception of "justice as fairness" are important. His conception of justice (within a democratic

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[36] Rawls stated that the worth in developing a political conception of justice is not to exactly answer questions about justice in all contexts but "to set out a framework for thought within which they can be approached" (2001, p. 12). Rawls's scholastic approach to the interpretation of political philosophers suggests a unique framework and his theory of justice is more reminiscent of a framework itself—a way of seeing justice.

[37] Rawls describes a democratic society in terms of equality (e.g. fair conditions, equality of opportunity, etc.) and social cooperation (based on mutually decided criteria for fairness): "Since in a democratic society citizens are regarded from the point of view of the political conception as free & equal persons, the principles of a democratic conception of justice maybe be viewed as specifying fair terms of cooperation between citizens so conceived" (2001, p. 7).

society) is intentionally non-historical. By this, it is meant that his concept is not based in an existent society or one that has previously existed—it is entirely hypothetical in its presumed "veil of ignorance" (also called the "original position"), democratic orientation, and "basic structure of society" (2001). As previously suggested, Rawls's principles of justice do not explicitly seek to alleviate injustices of the present moment, or of another time in human history. However, this is *not* to say: 1. that Rawls's conceptualizing of justice is *not* limited by the historical moment (the time) in which he wrote; or 2. That the individuals of present societies could not benefit in terms of civic engagement or governance from Rawls's ideas.[38] Indeed, Rawls had a practicable aim for justice as fairness, which was to "provide an acceptable philosophical and moral basis for democratic institutions and thus to address the question of how the claims of liberty and equality are to be understood" (2001, p. 5).

Veil of Ignorance: Beyond its exemption of history, there are other important preconditions that Rawls acknowledges as putting limitations on justice as fairness. The preconditions limit the breadth and applicability of its claims as a philosophical and moral basis for democratic institutions. Rawls's *veil of ignorance* poses the question: How would we act and interpret what is fair, right and moral if we had no information about how it would impact our own situation? If we were ignorant to what we could personally gain, how would we structure society's institutions and what basic rights would we establish as universal? Rawls believed that the veil of ignorance was essential

[38] To address 1. further, it is logical to assume that a capable scholar, analyzing the texts a century or two from now, would see historical limitations in what Rawls conceived just as Rawls has detected in the work of political philosophers before him. To address 2. further, while Rawls is intentionally non-historical and hypothetical, his ideas could (and arguably are) applicable or useful to actual societies in present existence.

to establishing the criteria of fairness, or the fair terms of social cooperation that create the foundation for a democratic society (2001, p.7). Rawls suggests that individuals' ability to reason is clouded by the perceived outcomes. In other words, their reasoning is shaped by how its logical outcomes will potentially impact their own well-being. The veil of ignorance removes people's investment by creating a hypothetical situation in which people do not know their position. Ignorant of their own ability to gain or lose from the criteria established, they can objectively arrive at decisions that reflect a pervading sense of fairness, that are, in other words, just.

The Basic Structure: In his description of "the basic structure", Rawls is establishing a focus and scope for his conceiving of justice. "[J]ustice as fairness takes the primary subject of political justice to be the basic structure of society…The nature and role of the basic structure importantly influence social and economic inequalities and enter into determining appropriate principles of justice" (2001, p. 40). Rawls discussion of justice as fairness is within an ideal society, which establishes its legitimacy by being "effectively regulated by a public conception of justice" via "society's basic structure—that is, its main political and social institutions and the way they hang together as one system of cooperation", which must be "publicly known, or with good reason believed, to satisfy those principles of justice" (2001, pp. 8-9). The basic structure of society produces fair conditions by being comprised of institutions, that evidentially uphold commonly-held principles of justice (that have been mutually arrived at and agreed to) in a coherent manner and effective manner. Embedded within his description of the basic structure is an understanding that Rawls's theorizing about justice is limited by the level at which it is being conceived. "One should not assume in advance that principles that are

reasonable and just for the basic structure are also reasonable and just for institutions, associations and social practices generally" (Rawls, 2001, p. 11). Rawls acknowledges that beliefs about political justice are not applicable to all situations (without preconditions) and to all breadths without restrictions to one's idealizing. "Justice as fairness is a political, not a general, conception of justice: it applies first to the basic structure and sees these other questions of local justice and also questions of global justice (what I call the law of peoples) as calling for a separate consideration on their merits" (2001, p. 11). Rawls's theorizing of justice as fairness is to refine philosophically and morally (as previously stated) a basis for a democratically functioning society. This level of theorizing speaks to neither local, nor global dimensions of justice.

Within his discussion of the basic structure, Rawls explicitly states a belief about the relationship between the causes of inequality and society's structure. Why is the basic structure the primary subject of political justice in Rawls's theory of justice? Rawls answers "because the effects of the basic structure [society's institutions] on citizens' aims, aspirations, and character, as well as on their opportunities and their ability to take advantage of them, are pervasive and present from the beginning of life" (2001, p. 10 quoting Rawls, 1971, sec. 15-16). According to Rawls, society's structure so fundamentally conditions the fairness of citizens' lives that their philosophical and moral basis is of primary concern.

> …[L]et us suppose that the fundamental social and economic inequalities are the differences in citizens' life-prospects (their prospects over a complete life) as they are affected by such things as their social class of origin, their native endowments, their opportunities for education, and their good or ill-fortune over

> the course of life (sec. 16). We ask: by what principles are differences of that kind—differences in life-prospects—made legitimate and consistent with idea of free and equal citizenship in society seen as fair system of cooperation (2001, p. 40 quoting in part Rawls, 1971, sec. 16)?

Rawls articulated that inequitable outcomes lead back to the basic structure, the civic institutions that structure and legitimize them. He points out that identity markers, such as the "social class of origin", affect life-prospects as part of a legitimization of difference, even within societies with ideas of "free and equal citizenship". Thereby, a society does not meet Rawls's criteria of a democracy when it fails to uphold equality and basic liberties amidst a fair system of social cooperation.

Democratic Orientation: To understand how differences are legitimized, it would seem logical to question the democratic orientation of the citizens. We can revisit Rawls's notion of the political view, which is how citizens come to think "about political justice and the common good, and about what institutions and policies best promote them" in order to make decisions "about basic rights and liberties" (2007, p. 5). However, to understand how individuals come to a unique understanding of what justice is and a political view that reflects democratic principles is not Rawls's primary purpose. "Justice as fairness […] tries to articulate a family of highly significant (moral) values that characteristically apply to the political and social institutions of the basic structure" (Rawls, 2001, p. 40). The foundation of commonly held principles is assumed for the purpose of working through an application of justice to the basic structure of society. Rawls states:

> Recall first that justice as fairness is framed for a democratic society. It's principles are meant to answer the question: once we view a democratic society as a fair system of cooperation between citizens regarded as free and equal, what principles are most appropriate to it (2001, p. 39)?

The process by which democratic society becomes a fair system of cooperation with free and equal citizens (principles of equality and liberty) remains unanswered. By what process do individuals acquire such beliefs or how might they be instilled is not clear.

Two Principles of Justice: Justice as fairness as stated in *A Theory of Justice* and *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement* has two key principles. The first speaks to the tension between liberty and equality, and the second to the tension between equality and differences in access or opportunity. The first principle states: "Each person has the same indefeasible claim to a fully adequate scheme of equal basic liberties, which scheme is compatible with same scheme of liberties for all" (Rawls, 2001, p. 43 quoting Rawls, 1971, sec. 11-14). The second, lengthier principle reads:

> Social and economic inequalities are to satisfy two conditions: first they are to be attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity; and second, they are to be to the greatest benefit of the least-advantaged members of society (the difference principle) (Rawls, 2001, p. 43 quoting Rawls, 1971, sec. 11-14).

The first of these two principles of justice is common in the American lexicon of democracy. Within core political doctrines it is explicitly stated. The *Preamble to the Declaration of Independence* affirms equality and the *Bill of Rights* ensures basic liberties

under constitutional democracy.[39] The second principle, though not antithetical to American democracy, is (in its second half) in conflict with some American perceptions of capitalism as a meritocracy, which would have us believe that those who are not in possession of wealth and political power do not deserve it by virtue of their inadequacies. This free-market mentality writ large affirms that the market fairly structures the outcomes of individuals socially, politically, and economically. Therefore, to advantage the least-advantaged, might work against some people's "American" sense of fairness and work ethic.

Important to the conclusion of thinking about all of these philosophers' texts is that they spoke to the moment in which they were written. While Locke and Hobbes do not subscribe any temporality to what they wrote (seemingly favoring a more universal and timeless tone) their ideas were still profoundly influenced by and reliant upon the social and political dilemmas of their day. The interest in a peaceful consent to political power and the legitimacy for how state power is used addresses the political upheaval and abuses that they witnessed. However, pointing to the individuality of each man's perception of how to mediate those tensions, they have distinct philosophies around what is ideal governance, the nature of human morality, and the necessary socio-political disposition of citizens of a commonwealth. Alternatively, Marx is explicit about the historical moment in which he is writing and how that leads to his certainty about the course of human action. He believes that revolutionary action is necessary for the creation of a more ideal society around principles of equality, self-determination and

[39] In other sections of this study it is argued that institutions (schools, hospitals, transit agencies, etc.) within the United States have failed to consistently enforce such ideals and secure equal liberties for all people as stated in these doctrines.

economic justice. Retreating from a particular exemplar or context, Rawls positions his philosophy on justice as occurring within ideal conditions of a democratic society with engaged citizens, who share common ideas of what justice is and how it is achieved collectively. He uses this idealized society to explore the relationship between institutions and the legitimizing of different life-prospects. Rawls explores what are the social and political conditions of fairness and develops two principles of justice about equal basic liberties, and equal opportunities and access

II. Literature Review: Part 3: An American Social Justice Movement

African American Civil Rights Movement (1954-1968)

Background & Context of an American Struggle for Racial Justice

The Civil Rights Movement, also known as the African American Freedom Movement, is popularly understood as a synthesis of events stemming from the political activism of blacks, striving for racial equality; and particularly, it is a period in which African Americans struggled openly and politically for the end of segregation in the United States. Decades of activism for racial justice preceded the Civil Rights Movement and followed it; indeed, it evolved into a diverse social movement, comprised of activists of varying racial, ethnic, gender and class identities and with differing notions on the path to racial justice and the content of what represented "freedom" for the racially oppressed.[40] While the end of segregation (Jim Crow laws, or discriminatory local/state policies enforcing racial separation) was perhaps the central focus of the Movement, it is clear that other, complementary issues within racial justice like economic parity and autonomy, and equal political representation (suffrage rights in the South) were important objectives in the struggle.[41] The Civil Rights Movement had global dimensions and presence as it was prompted by and informed decolonization efforts in other parts of the

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[40] People of many different social identities did support and participate in the Movement. Several sources on the Movement point to this reality of its diversity but also to the fact that some people, such as young women, were frequently left out of official accounts and recording of events (Barnett 1993; Hoose 2009).

[41] Jim Crow laws were essentially an extension of the political, social and economic control that whites had over blacks under slavery; through a dehumanizing prescription of black life, these laws intended to mediate any substantive freedoms that blacks might have gained in the Post-Antebellum South (Inwood, 2009). Jim Crow laws served as a physical as well as symbolic enforcement of white supremacy, and perpetuated widely held beliefs in the inferiority of blacks and their rightful place at the lowest levels of American society (Davis, 1971; Du Bois,1940).

world and an emergent, pan-African Black Power movement (Inwood, 2009; McPhail & Frank, 2009). Certainly, the images and stories of the freedom struggle were familiar to those outside of the U.S. who were similarly struggling for forms of racial justice. The Civil Rights Movement became a model for other major rights movements within the United States that followed like the Chicano Movement, the Women's Liberation Movement, the Native American Rights Movement, and the LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender) Movement. Toward the purpose of understanding the impact of social movements on defining social justice, and particularly toward achieving social justice through education, the African American Civil Rights Movement uniquely positions one to do so because of the central role that both education and young people, including students, played in the Movement.

Dates attributed to the African American Civil Rights Movement vary across history and academic texts, and therefore, some inconsistencies exist regarding the scope of events that get included as central to its story. While it evidently reached its height in the mid 1960's (with the passage of the Civil Rights Act in 1964 and the Voting Rights Act in 1965, and the occurrence of the "Bloody Sunday" march in Selma in 1965), most scholars look to the 1950's for the Movement's impetus in the Supreme Court ruling of *Brown v. Board of Education, Topeka, Kansas*. The Movement's denouement, beginning in 1965, was largely the result of growing doubt about the effectiveness of non-violence as a strategy for gaining political power and further fragmentation amongst grassroots organizers striving for racial justice (McPhail & Frank, 2009, p. 215). There is no conclusive indicator of the Civil Rights Movement's end, although the 1968 assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. is a significant turning point.

The Movement was catapulted by the ruling of segregation to be unethical and in violation of the equal rights and protections afforded citizens under the constitution in *Brown,* 1954. This ruling overturned an earlier Supreme Court decision, *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896, 163 U.S. 537), which had allowed for the constitutionality of "separate but equal" public facilities and differing social and political accommodations for whites from those that were deemed "colored" by law. *Brown* challenged the ethical existence of numerous Jim Crow laws of state and local governments that laid out the policies of segregation in several aspects of public life including schooling, housing, transportation, and voting (Myrdal, 1944; Woodward, 1955). The Supreme Court ruling emphasized not only the material inequalities of separate schooling but also the intellectual, social and spiritual degradation that African American children experienced under segregation, stating its likely irreversible impact on their well-being and ability to learn. *Brown* states regarding the separation of children in schools:

> "To separate them from others of similar age and qualifications solely because of their race generates a feeling of inferiority as to their status in the community that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely ever to be undone… Segregation of white and colored children in public schools has a detrimental effect upon the colored children. The impact is greater when it has the sanction of the law; for the policy separating the races is usually interpreted as denoting the inferiority of the negro group. A sense of inferiority affects the motivation of a child to learn. Segregation with the sanction of law, therefore, has a tendency to [retard] the educational and mental development of negro children and to deprive

them of some of the benefits they would receive in a racial[ly] integrated school system" (*Brown*, 1954, 347 U.S. 483, n10).

In addition to *Brown*, many also point to the Montgomery Bus Boycott (1955-1956) and the actions of Rosa Parks as the instigator of the Movement.[42] In actuality, several factors contributed to the social and historical moment in which the Civil Rights Movement was born (Spring, 2004).

War & new moral imperative: World War I and World War II are oft mentioned by historians as slowly creating a new moral imperative within the United States to treat its black citizens in a more humane fashion. The United States, as a moral compass for the world, was coming under scrutiny for espousing the righteousness of its beliefs regarding democracy and human rights, while at home, the lynchings and other forms of brutality and discrimination against its own black citizens were being highlighted in media as film and televised news broadcasts were increasingly more commonplace and accessible (Osborne 2007; Spring 2004). The appalling imagery connected with Jim Crow helped to spur popular outrage during the course of the Movement but also increased global pressure from U.S. allies and critics to change its laws and practices.

Blacks were also more outspokenly disgruntled, during this period, with a government that was willing to draft them as soldiers into war, but would not give them full citizenship rights, ensure their equal access to jobs and housing, or protect them from the brutality of white supremacists and anti-integration mobs (Cayton & Drake, 1944;

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[42] Rosa Parks's refusal to give up her seat on the bus is commonly thought of as the catalyst for black activism in the Civil Rights Movement. Interestingly, Parks is said to have been motivated by the brutality against Emmett Till (Osborne 2007, p. 144) and young women, such as Claudette Colvin, preceded Parks in their attempts to get the Montgomery Bus System integrated. Such examples demonstrate the domino effect of the formation of the Civil Rights Movement.

Davis, 1971; Hunt, 2009; Myrdal, 1944). Economics played a key role as an increased number of blacks migrated to city centers in the North and Midwest (known as "The Great Migration"), in order to work in newly available factory and service jobs that had been vacated or created as part of increased production tied to the wars and the rising industrialization of the United States. Blacks obtained only the lowest skilled and least paid positions, suffering harsh discrimination in hiring and unionization, and frequent maltreatment by employers. Both "job ceilings" and job cuts (especially during the Great Depression) more severely impacted black migrants from the South than their white or European immigrant counterparts (Cayton &Drake, 1944).

Global decolonization efforts: The literature, ideas and strategies coming from decolonization efforts in Africa, the Caribbean and India greatly impacted the philosophy and practices of black and student organizers as well as key figureheads in the Civil Rights Movement.[43] The sharing of experiences of exploitation and the rupture of culture as a result of displacement under colonization and enslavement particularly united the African Diaspora; this was referred to as the "Black Atlantic experience," which affirmed "a common racial experience" and called "into question geographic constructions which justified the exploitation and marginalization of persons of color" (Inwood, 2009, p. 491) in the United States and other parts of the colonized world. Franz Fanon, Mahatma Gandhi, Marcus Garvey and others whose ideas led to mass global organizing around racialized forms of oppression and state domination, spurred what could be thought of as

[43] See both the autobiographies of Martin Luther King, Jr. (1998) and Malcolm X (1965) for many examples of their involvement on an international level in discussions of human rights, racial justice, and economic and political autonomy for colonized states. The global nature of each man's work and ideas is well documented in their own accounts as well as in academic texts.

a global civil rights movement of which the United States was only a part. Mahatma Gandhi and Marcus Garvey clearly impacted the intellectual and strategic formation of the Movement in the U.S. Gandhi's struggle for Indian independence from Britain was a model for Martin Luther King, Jr. and other members of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) as well as the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) that were utilizing non-violence as a strategy to protest unfair treatment under Jim Crow. They were also using non-violence—peaceful marches, sit-ins, and freedom rides—as a media and social-awareness technique to highlight the violence and cruelty of Southern law enforcement and white supremacists in their resistance to blacks' quest for civil rights. Marcus Garvey was a Jamaican intellectual, publisher and journalist, as well as founder of the pan-African Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), who moved to Harlem during its Renaissance in the 1920's and 1930's.[44] He advanced ideas of Black Nationalism amongst the artists and intellectuals there. He prompted a "Bok Tu" (Jamaican Patios for "Back To") Africa Movement in the Caribbean and United States that celebrated the link between former slaves in the Americas and their African brothers and sisters across the globe, and also encouraged them to return to the continent to be its redeemers from Europe. Garvey followers, "Garveyites", elevated black and African identity, spoke to its universal worth, and preached social and economic separatism and militancy as a means to regaining true

[44] There is a growing number of sources on the Black Power movement and the origins of Black Power thought (Joseph, 2008). Prior to, during, and after the Civil Rights Movement, Black Power activists are credited with forming international alliances, fighting for "bread and butter issues" for blacks, and advocating for self-determination. See Christian (2004) and Carter (2002) for more information about Garvey's ideas, activism and ties to the Civil Rights Movement.

identity and self-determination. Garvey's philosophy of separatism and Black Power predates similar ideas espoused by Malcolm X and the members of the Nation of Islam, and the Black Panthers in the late 1960's.

Black organizing: The Civil Rights Movement relied upon the experience, activism, and coordination of a number of black organizations, churches, and educational institutions several of which predate the 1954 *Brown* decision, including the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), the Nation of Islam (NOI), Howard University and Morehouse College.[45] Countless other transformational organizations formed *during* the Movement, like the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). Several of these earlier organizations, universities, and churches were either directly active in the Movement's organizing and funding, or helped to produce the black intellectuals and organizers that led much of the Movement, such as Martin Luther King Jr., Kwame Toure (Stokley Carmichael), Malcolm X and Thurgood Marshall. [46]

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[45] One could argue that Nation of Islam members worked separate from activists of the Civil Rights Movement, and therefore, the NOI should not be counted as one of the Movement's central organizations. However, the NOI did launch the political and oratorical career of Malcolm X and advance ideas of Black Power in prisons and more generally. Muhammad Ali is another prominent black figure in the Nation that popularly represented the uplift of African Americans during the 1960's. Rather than looking at the Nation of Islam as removed from the organizations commonly thought of as central to the Civil Rights Movement (just as this study suggests Black Power is a significant aspect of the Movement instead of counter to it), it can be interpreted as an organization that advanced certain parts and ideas of the Movement, such as militancy and separatism, that were not common across all organizations mentioned. The NOI also did much to support black communities and celebrate black identity—aspects aligning its work with the central foci of the Civil Rights Movement.

[46] Black churches have been increasingly recognized in academic literature as the center of the African American community and traditionally as a major site of political and social organizing in black communities since emancipation (McPhail & Frank, 2009).

Convergence & the Complexity of the Historical Moment. The Civil Rights Movement was born out of a convergence of ideas, perpetuated by several factors, and comprised of a wealth of aligning and competing philosophies of justice and strategies for achieving justice. This truth points to the fact that history is not inevitable. Things could have unfolded differently with the absence of certain activists, ideas, events, etc. If things had shifted slightly so could have the course of the Movement and its effects on the modern U.S. landscape of politics and society. Without question, it is beyond the scope of this study to account for the breadth of ideas and the multitude of people that were active in the Civil Rights Movement. Numerous figures shaped the Movement in the popular conscience and helped form the nations' pervading ideas about racial justice (including previously mentioned Marcus Garvey and Mahatma Gandhi as well as Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X, Robert Kennedy, and W.E.B. Du Bois). The Movement was certainly both local and global, and it consisted of a top-down dimension and a grassroots one. The Movement was top-down in that important roles at different stages of the Movement were played by the Supreme Court, Executive Branch and Legislature in both supporting and thwarting aspects of the struggle for racial justice. [47] At the same time, the Movement was characterized by the massive organizing of people,

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However, most literature on the African American Freedom Movement focuses on the leaders/orators of these churches verses the churches themselves and their congregations. A review of the literature proved that it was generally more difficult to find the churches described than information on their prominent leaders, such as Martin Luther King Jr., Ralph Abernathy, Bernard Lee, Fred Shuttlesworth, Mordecai Wyatt Johnson, Malcolm X, Theodore Parker Ferris and Elijah Muhammad.

[47] Several sources can be found that speak to the three branches of government's involvement in desegregation during Civil Rights Movement. The first section of Spring (2004), Chp. 6: The Great Civil Rights Movement and the New Culture Wars (p. 100-105), provides a condensed discussion of the participation of these aspects of government in the Civil Rights Movement through the lens of education. Orfield (1997) also provides a helpful synopsis of court decisions, legislation and popular reaction to desegregation.

"the grassroots" (frequently poor and middle class blacks), with no special access to political power—often the opposite—that sought to change the system or reform it through varying levels of collective action. The components of racial justice, as conceived by individuals within the Movement, were nuanced and how to achieve it heartily, and sometimes violently, contested. Contestation came from within and outside the freedom struggle. Many outside the Movement, particularly privileged and Southern whites, did not want to see racial justice come to fruition in the United States. The rationalizations founding white resistance to this movement could be construed in several ways and had numerous origins (Woodward, 1955). Two ideological foundations for white resistance were belief in the merit of white privilege (based in a belief in white supremacy as notably advocated by the Ku Klux Klan) and also a belief in the righteousness and benefit of segregation (support of social, political or economic separation between black and white communities) that was in existence in various forms since Reconstruction (Massey & Denton; Myrdal, 1944; Woodward, 1955). It is important to note that some people *within* the Movement, working for greater racial justice on behalf of African Americans, also believed in racial separation verses integration. However, such individuals maintained a goal of bettering social, political and economic outcomes for black people and disrupting the status quo of their oppression (e.g. the Nation of Islam, Malcolm X, Stokely Carmichael, and Black Panthers).

Dr. King & Malcolm X: Illuminating Philosophical & Strategic Tensions in Movement

The two most prominent figures in the Civil Rights Movement were arguably Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X. While both men shared the desire to see the brutality of Jim Crow and racial discrimination in the United States end, they also

differed in their notions of how to achieve racial justice and of what justice consists. They are discussed as having opposing views and an antagonizing role in the other's work despite holding a common goal of racial justice.[48] The two men as exemplars of the Movement point to its philosophical and practical tensions: the gap between violent revolution ("by any means necessary") and peaceful protest in the achievement of its goals, the gulf between integration and separatism in securing the best outcome for blacks in the U.S. and abroad, and the difficulty in sustaining a Movement that advocated inclusivity verses one that advocated Black Power. With that said, both Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr.'s ideas evolved and both men had noteworthy shifts in how they were thinking about racial equality toward the end of their lives.

Differing backgrounds & experiences. It is important to resist thinking of either as straw men, and understand that Malcolm X and Dr. King had very different life experiences, educations, and operated in largely different contexts (one in the urban North and Midwest, and the other, mostly in the more rural, agriculture-based South).[49]

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[48] The tension between the two is palpable in the brief chapter on Malcolm X that is included in King's autobiography (King 1998, p. 266). Yet, King also expressed a level of admiration and respect for Malcolm X despite their differences; he states, "He [Malcolm X] was an eloquent spokesman for his point of view and no on can honestly doubt that Malcolm had a great concern for the problems that we face as a race. While we did not always see eye to eye on methods to solve the race problems, I always had a deep affection for Malcolm and felt that he had the great ability to put his finger on the existence and root of the problem" (King 1998; p. 265).

[49] King's historical and geographical context was essential to his identity as a civil rights leader, his formation of justice and his experience of injustice: "Dr. King explains that segregation seemed to drop a curtain over his life, that it inhibited him from expressing self-hood, that the "very idea of separation did something to my sense of dignity and self-respect" (King 1998; 12)… Yet the American South's racial apartheid system caused a situation which both confined African Americans and unintentionally encouraged the creation of alternative spheres of public engagement…Thus Dr. King's experiences of living in the Jim Crow South infuses his work with political consciousness created by the

Dr. King's experiences of segregation both its limitations and detrimental aspects, and also the alternative social spaces it created like the Black Church, Booker T. Washington Comprehensive High School, and Morehouse College developed his consciousness of racial injustice. In contrast, Malcolm X's life experiences in the Midwest and Northeast were informed by dispossession and exploitation, but his youth lacked the particular intensity of growing up under Jim Crow laws in the South. However, Malcolm's youth does not reflect the stability, affluence, access to formal education, or sense of community that seemed foundational to Dr. King.[50] Such differences in experience between the men undoubtedly impacted the divergent formation of each man's ideals of racial justice, and partially account for the gulf between the priorities that they each identified, the people with whom they worked, and how they perceived that justice could be achieved. Mostly importantly, in a closer reading of each man's life, it is apparent that his ideas around justice and strategies for achieving it were fluid and nuanced.

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way the daily lives of African Americans were confined by segregation. Yet it is the potentially liberatory aspects of that reality which are critical to Dr King's intellectual and spiritual development …The contradictions which are part of the experience of growing up in the Jim Crow South are central to King's notions of community (Inwood, 2009, p. 491).

[50] King remarked about "the nature of Malcolm's life" pointing to the particular hardships of his youth and the impact of the place and time in which he developed: "He…was a victim of the despair that inevitably derives from the condition of oppression, poverty and injustice which engulf the masses of our race. But in his youth, there was no hope, no preaching, teaching, or movements of nonviolence… He turned first to the underworld, but this did not fulfill the quest for meaning which grips young minds. It was a testimony to Malcolm's personal depth and integrity that he could not become an underworld czar, but turned again and again to religion for meaning and destiny. Malcolm was still turning and growing at the time of his brutal and meaningless assassination" (King 1998, p. 267). King expresses an appreciation for Malcolm's spirituality and religion—a dimension that drove his King's own conceptualization of social justice.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The recording of the Civil Rights Movement over the past 40 years has romanticized and simplified Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s ideas, and moreover it has minimized the urgency and hardship of his social justice struggle. [51] His "dream" of a just and integrated society is largely known to the American populace as a benign and moral call for a colorblind society. However, his philosophy of racial justice as tied to ideas of economic justice, Christian theology and non-violence is more complex than it is frequently portrayed. His expressions of anger at the immense injustice of black poverty in the United States, his calls for reparations, and his condemnation of the economic foundation of white privilege do not support an interpretation of his social justice work as secondary to the achievement of racial harmony or peace in the United States.

Dr. King read Gandhi and utilized Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence in his work with the SCLC.[52] Gandhi's extension of love as a humanitarian principle capable of inspiring a collective struggle for justice inspired King's commitment to its application in the U.S. context. No doubt, King elevated Gandhi in U.S. consciousness and through Gandhi's example is credited with establishing non-violent strategies (e.g. peaceful marches, sit-ins, boycotts) as normative practices for modern US social movements. Less known is that King was influenced to use non-violent tactics by other civil rights

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[51] Scholars have spoken to how Dr. King's message has been selectively entertained by the American population and not remembered in its breadth or complexity (W.A.T.E. R., 2009).

[52] The Southern Christian Leadership Council (SCLC) was a prominent civil rights organization that supported Dr. King's work and effectively implemented many of the nonviolent grassroots actions, such as boycotts and marches, that were associated with Dr. King and that are used as examples of Gandhi's influence on the Civil Rights Movement in the U.S.

organizers within the Movement, particularly students, and was not always the instigator or visionary of the efforts in which he became involved (McPhail & Frank 2009). King and others' appropriation of Gandhi also points to the global connection the Civil Rights Movement had to other struggles for civil and human rights, and toward the collective establishment of a global moral standard for the treatment of all people regardless of racial, ethnic or national identity.[53] On the basis of this moral standard, Dr. King objected to the U.S.'s Vietnam War effort and to the nation's capitalist-based participation in (exploitation of) much of the colonized and developing world (Inwood 2009).[54]

Martin Luther King, Jr.'s commitment to social justice, his rhetorical style and his sense of community were highly influenced by his participation in the Black Church (McPhail & Frank 2009). King's long relationship with the Church, in addition to his educational training in theology, and his study of Gandhi led to his thoughts on justice being largely rooted in the establishment of diverse, tolerant communities of people unified under principles of nonviolence, goodwill and equality (Inwood 2009; McPhail & Frank 2009). King also infused his philosophy of justice with Marxian principles and, although he was said to have struggled with Marx's position on religion and morality,

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[53] At his acceptance of the Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo, King illuminated his own vision of a global moral standard, which was tied to the end of racism, the foundation of brotherhood, the establishment of peace, and a base standard of living for all people: "I have the audacity to believe that peoples everywhere can have three meals a day for their bodies, education and culture for their minds, and dignity, equality, and freedom for their spirits (King 1998, p. 260).

[54] Dr. King expressed clear regret at the moments in which he had not been more outspoken against the Vietnam conflict and explains how silence is a form of complacency that implicates the silent in the unjust acts of the perpetrator (King 1998, p. 336).

there are clear parallels in how King and Marx defined justice in society.[55] It would seem that King supported Marx's position on the destructiveness of capitalism. There is a parallel to be found between Dr. King's audacious dream of the "Beloved Community" (achieved through the struggle of striking sanitary workers and the marching of the poor and disenfranchised) and that of Marx's proletariat-led revolution toward the achievement of a "true democracy".[56] Both men envision the oppressed as the inevitable and necessary saviors of their oppressors and how they see the grassroots as empowered with the ability to change the course of history[57].

Dr. King disagreed with the tactics advocated by those within the Black Power Movement but he sympathized with their despair and anger at the sustained horror of U.S. racism (King 1998). In April 1967, Dr. King's activity in Memphis, Tennessee suggested he was embarking on a more radical mission. He shifted publicly from a message emphasizing integration to one of economic justice. He more harshly criticized whites, especially those in power, for the terrible poverty in which most blacks lived.

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[55] Despite many ways in which King appears to have appropriated Marx or was aligned with Marxist critiques of capitalism, King was critical of Marx's position on religion and his apparent moral relativism (King 1998). However, a larger reading on King's life including his speeches, letters, and essays would suggest that King's inspiration came from numerous places including the Black Church, Gandhi, Christian philosophy, student civil rights organizers *and* Marx.

[56] See Inwood (2009) for an in-depth discussion of King's concept of the Beloved Community.

[57] Dr. King remarked: "I am not sad that black Americans are rebelling; this was not only inevitable but eminently desirable. Without this magnificent ferment among Negroes, the old evasions and procrastinations would have continued indefinitely. Black men have slammed the door shut on a past of deadening passivity. Except for the Reconstruction years, they have never in their long history on American soil struggled with such creativity and courage for their freedom. These are our bright years of emergence; though they are painful ones, they cannot be avoided" (1998, p. 349).

Consequently, Dr. King lost support toward the end of this life in both liberal white communities and more radical black ones—he became increasingly unpopular in one for this radicalism and the other for his pacifism. Although his support waned and people lost patience with nonviolent tactics, Dr. King never publicly relinquished hope in the prospect that nonviolent protest would lead to the humane, inclusive community that he envisioned.

Malcolm X. Malcolm X was infamous within the United States in the late 1950s and early 1960s, known as the provocative Minister for the Nation of Islam and the figurehead of Black Muslim resistance to racial degradation. As the most vocal proponent of the Nation's values and its leader Elijah Muhammad, Malcolm X espoused a unique set of beliefs stemming from Islamic doctrine, but infused with ideas about African American separatism and militancy in response to the oppression of blacks within the United States. While still in prison, Malcolm X began to study the history of blacks in the United States and determined that the popularized accounting of history in the western world, and particularly within the United States, had a harmful impact on blacks' sense of identity and power, hiding the truth of their past exploitation and teaching them to be ashamed (Malcolm X, 1965). From his "homemade education" Malcolm X constructed a counter-narrative to the version of American history promulgated; *his* version of history emphasized blacks' exploitation by whites over time, and it highlighted blacks' agency in the reproduction or destruction of their current oppressive conditions. Malcolm X wanted African Americans to recognize that they had the capacity to change the conditions of their lives by recognizing their complicity in their own suffering and, alternatively, engaging in organized, collective resistance.

Malcolm X defined injustice as the pervading exploitation and oppression—materially, mentally and spiritually—of blacks by whites in the United States. He saw himself as a messenger whose mission was to raise the consciousness of America's black people (Malcolm X, 1965).

Often less prominent in popular consciousness is the recognition that Malcolm X's views began to significantly change before his assassination.[58] Toward the end of his life, Malcolm X's views became more nuanced, shifted with his mounting experience, and were subtly challenged by the entrance of new people into his life. Malcolm X's pilgrimage to Mecca, and subsequent his visits to the Middle East and Africa, had lasting impact on his view of white people. His ideas about the nature of American racism were challenged by people he met and experiences he had. Malcolm X writes in his 1965 autobiography about his epiphany on race while making his pilgrimage (p. 324). His experiences with white complexioned men outside the United States opened up the possibility in Malcolm's mind that racism was not biologically driven—meaning it was not the result of being white in appearance—but, rather, the result of enculturation. Malcolm began to recognize racism as specific attitudes and actions that are part of white identity within the United States. This possibility shifted into a hypothesis, which characterized his message to the public in the months preceding his assassination.

[58] Ossie Davis in his essay on Malcolm X (1965, included at the end of Malcolm X's autobiography) talks of Malcolm's transformation and the potential for him to be viewed as a martyr in the struggle for the rights and dignity of blacks in American society (p. 458-459).

Youth Participation in the Civil Rights Movement

The Civil Rights Movement would not have flourished at the grassroots level, or pressed so heavily upon popular conscience, without the sacrificial participation of countless youth. In May 1963, during the Children's Crusade in Birmingham, Alabama

> hundreds of students—many carrying blankets, toothbrushes, and school books—skipped their classes and came ready to demonstrate […] large numbers were arrested, and when police ran out of paddy-wagons, school buses were used to carry the children away […] While some participants ran when the police approached, most of the marchers fell to their knees and prayed. At the end of the day, over 900 children were taken away to Birmingham jails (Cook & Racine, 2005, p. 32).

Students of varying ages participated heavily in marches, sit-ins and various acts of civil disobedience (including "freedom rides" and black voter registration efforts). [59] The cruelty tied to white resistance that motivated unspeakable acts of violence against African American children emphasized the moral abhorrence of Southern white supremacy and its contradiction to American democracy. [60] The suffering and bravery of

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[59] Finley (2006) gives great detail of students' activities as part of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) in Alabama and the severe resistance and danger they encountered (including threats & beatings from law enforcement and mobs) in their efforts to integrate three Delta towns in the early 1960's. Similarly, the lynchings of James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner (retaliation for their voter registration efforts) during the Mississippi Freedom Summer demonstrate the acute threat political representation for blacks signified to many white Southerners.

[60] The Children's Crusade; the murder of Emmett Till; the plight of the Little Rock Nine; and the bombing of Sixteenth Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, are some prominent examples of the array of violence that was targeted at and befell youth and students during the Civil Rights Movement.

young people, particularly disenfranchised black youth that were incarcerated, beaten, murdered and publicly threatened, captured the necessary national and global attention to pressure the executive and legislative branches of the U.S. government to force policy change.[61] Similarly, the quest for equitable education gave a dimension to the Movement that was youth-oriented, inspired greater empathy, and highlighted the centrality of the achievement of basic human rights as a key motivation for the Movement's activism.

The Civil Rights Movement: A Protracted Struggle for Racial Justice

The Civil Rights Movement is popularly characterized as a decisive moment in the social and political development of the United States. In reality, it is hardly a moment—but a sustained struggle that encompasses the efforts and sacrifices of countless people, many of which are ordinary, everyday citizens whose sacrifices remain unrecorded (Harms & Lettow 2008). As is evident, the Movement was not just comprised of the figureheads whose words and actions are recognized in the most referred to texts on the freedom struggle, but the masses of people who suffered and triumphed in the unfolding of events in which they helped orchestrate (Hall, 2008). Undoubtedly, the creation of history (the enactment and recording of humans' lives) is fluid; the grassroots work around civil rights in the United States shifts and evolves with new social actors and new foci, but the struggle undoubtedly remains today (Gay, 2004). Much occurred prior to the Civil Rights Movement that led to a culmination of racial

[61] The media coverage of the arrests & treatment of students during the Birmingham campaign helped lead to the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. "The next day newspapers around the country carried shocking images of the violence taking place… Pictures of children being attacked by dogs, of fire hoses knocking bodies into the street and up against buildings, and of women being beaten by policemen helped awaken the moral conscience of the nation" (Cook & Racine, 2005, p. 32). However, this awakening was not instantaneous and moral reaction (in the form of granting greater rights) was not without further resistance and struggle.

tension and civil disobedience within the United States. The Movement noticeably evolved, some might argue unraveled, after 1968 with the loss of its most popular leader in Martin Luther King Jr., which was preceded by the arrests and murders of hundreds of activists, organizers and marchers; and the assassinations of Malcolm X in 1965 and President John Kennedy in 1963. With regard to its conclusion, many people maintain that the Movement's central aim has not been accomplished. And even with the election of the United States' first African American President, Barak Obama, we are far from living in "a more perfect union" where "the 'dream' of a postracial, color-blind America" has been achieved (McPhail & Frank 2009, p. 210). Institutionalized preferences and prejudices continue to structure social spaces along racial lines. Churches, as an example, indicate not only the enduring social separation, but also "spiritual segregation" of the American populace (McPhail & Frank 2009, p. 210). While (as a result of the Civil Rights Movement) segregation has formally been condemned by the legal system of the United States, systemic racial injustice persists, everyday prejudices continue, and in many instances, a clear separation between races in schooling, housing, and employment endures (Frankenberg, E., Siegel-Hawley, G. & Wang, J., 2010; Gay, 2004; U.N. Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, 2008).[62] Consequently, there is

[62] In 2008, major U.S. cities such as Chicago were deserving of titles like "The most segregated big city in the United States". *The Chicago Tribune* published an article that stated blacks in the U.S. are still a severely isolated racial group and in Chicago, in particular, "84 percent of the black or white population would need to change neighborhoods" for the city to be integrated (Little & Ahmed, 2006). The article found: "The fact is, racial patterns that took root in the 1800s are not easy to reverse. Racial steering, discriminatory business practices and prejudice spawned segregation in Chicago, and now personal preferences and economics fuel it. 'Once institutions exist, they tend to persist, and it requires some act of force to get them to change,' said Douglas Massey of Princeton University, an expert on segregation" (Little & Ahmed, 2006).

no apparent ending to the Civil Right Movement's struggle for freedom, particularly with regards to race, in the national history.

The Civil Rights Movement and Western Theories of Justice

Is there a connection between the western political philosophy explored earlier in this study and the Civil Rights Movement? The hardship of maintaining a social contract amidst competing ideals (and a diverse citizenry) is stark during the Movement. Such tensions are also apparent through a great expanse of time in the United States leading up to the Movement—from the Civil War through Reconstruction and both World Wars. Hobbes's concern regarding individuals' selfishness, and their capacity for greed and cruelty, as an issue that undermines social cohesion in the absence of a strong government is at least, in part, validated during this period. A government's unwillingness or failure to enforce an equitable social order is at the center of the African American Civil Rights Movement in the U.S. The ferocity of individual self-interest within the U. S. during this time is proven by many individual and collective acts of white resistance in reaction to the loss of ill-founded advantage, and in the absolute brutality that many whites were willing to employ in measures to keep such race-based privilege. Hobbes called for a measure of reflectivity and rationality as a means to overcome the violence of civil disputes, and while militancy and passion were important aspects of the Civil Rights Movement, the era was also characterized by efforts in conscious-raising, the instigation of national dialogues on race relations, and the participation in collective, non-violent resistance.

A call for tolerance and basic liberties for all people (regardless of racial identity) was the central work of the Movement. The necessity of such tolerance for a humane,

equitable society was also recognized on a global level in several non-violent decolonization efforts. However, in Dr. King's extension of tolerance into a Christian conception of love and community, he perhaps transcends Locke's initial ideal for how Christianity and social tolerance were interrelated. Tolerance of difference shifts noticeably into an acceptance of difference in many integration-based ideals espoused by King. Tolerance further manifests into justice as a celebration of diversity and difference with Pan-Africanism and Black Power, but then, devolves also into a source of hate and separation in some of the ideas espoused by the Nation of Islam and other separatist supporters.

Marxist critiques of capitalism, oppression, and ideology are interwoven into the ideas and words of Malcolm X, Dr. King, the Nation of Islam, Stokely Carmichael, and Marcus Garvey. The rise of communism and socialism in newly freed colonial territories during this era aided in the global perpetuation of socialist critiques of American and Western Imperialism. Consequently and simultaneously, some Civil Rights Activists of the 1950s through 1970s were targeted by U.S. government entities for their socialist or communist leanings. McCarthyism demonstrates the political intolerance that generally characterizes this era in the United States, and highlights the contradiction in pro-democracy, nationalist propaganda that incited defense of a homogenous conception of American society and civic engagement.

` Recalling that Rawls describes *justice as fairness* in two ways, the first in terms of equality (that all things regarding public resources and political power should be made equal in society) and the second in terms of difference (that barring the ability to make all things equal the differences in equality should benefit the least privileged in society),

Rawls's concept of justice as fairness in society is largely supported by both King's and Malcolm's work for racial justice. They argued that society should be equal for blacks and other people of color with regard to their white counterparts. Dr. King and Malcolm also protested for greater economic equality, suggesting that the poor should not be more disenfranchised, with lesser political representation and access, or less economic opportunity than white citizens. However, King and Malcolm also argued for racial justice in society based on a concept of fairness; difference should favor and even be utilized to repair the damage done to black citizens due to a legacy of slavery and segregation. The idea of reparations is established in a concept of how society can be reformed to be fairer in light of its unjust past. Suggestions made, that many of society's institutions should be *equalized* in terms of access and representation, were indeed controversial. However, the idea that there should be measures taken to *reverse* privilege and to repair the damage done by this legacy of racism was more akin to being revolutionary.

Civil Rights Movement's impact on conceiving social justice. The lengths to which society should go to compensate for past injustices strikes at the very heart of what is social justice. Is it the achievement of equality, in terms of *sameness* in the present system or situation? By sameness, one could mean equal incomes, equal test scores, equal hiring criteria, and equal access to vote. Or is social justice the compensation for marginalization, discrimination, and inequity at a broader level? Does social justice require a commitment to systemic change across society and for the purpose of not equalizing but compensating for past abuses? Answers to these questions are at the heart of past and current debates regarding reparations and affirmative action; many of these

debates began in the Civil Rights era. To what length should society go to be fair? What does justice demand of us? Equality and equity, sameness and justice, are not exclusive concepts, meaning achieving one thing might entail achieving the other. However, these concepts are not the same and a divergence of opinion in many areas over whether society should treat people the same (equality) or try to ensure the same outcomes (equity) is a the center of social justice debate.

The Legacy of Brown

Undeniably, the Civil Rights Movement is paramount to an understanding of the evolution of the U. S. education system and to its citizenry's ability to conceive of social justice in context of education. The *Brown* decision emphasized things of key importance: Education is central to the preservation of a democratic society; the reproduction of injustice through the public school system has an irreversible impact on students' learning; and, separation in public spaces, such as schools, leads to social exclusion and is psychologically harmful to children of color and ethnic/racial minorities, more broadly. *Brown* proves that in 1954, there was a national understanding that, for African American children, separation "generates a feeling of inferiority as to their status in the community that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely ever to be undone" and hinders their "educational and mental development" as well as detriments their "motivation…to learn" (1954, n10). And yet, today, the United States continues to have a system of apartheid schooling where children of color are educated separately from their white counterparts (Frankenberg, E., Siegel-Hawley, G. & Wang, J., 2010; Gay, 2004; Kozol, 2005; Orfield, 1997; Tatum, 2007). Even in ignorance of the overwhelming amount of quantifiable, observable indicators (e.g. standardized test

scores, per pupil funding, conditions of school buildings, graduation rates) that suggest schooling for urban, minority youth is unequal and grossly inferior to that of most whites—which clearly violates rights established by the Supreme Court decision of more than a century ago, *Plessy vs. Ferguson* (163 U.S. 537; 1896)—where does that leave the nation in terms of the "moral edit" (Gay, 2004, p. 13) of integration under *Brown*? The national conscious appears largely dismissive of the central lesson of *Brown*, which is the education system's broad impact on students emotionally, socially, intellectually and developmentally—not just economically or materially (Gay, 2004; Tatum, 2007). Recent court decisions favor rolling back many of the legal provisions made to ensure desegregation, "to subtlety dismantle the rewards of the Civil Rights Movement" (Hall, 2008, p. 47) in America's public schools and universities (Bell, 2007; Gay, 2004; Tatum, 2007; U.N. Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, 2008). Moreover, national data suggests that the United States has undeniably returned to pre-Civil Rights levels of racial segregation in schools (Bell, 2007; Frankenberg, E., Siegel-Hawley, G. & Wang, J., 2010; Kozol, 2005; Orfield, 1997). As a country, shouldn't the public education system, and the citizenry that supports it, concur with the logic of *Brown* and acknowledge that there is a profound social injustice—an immeasurable harm—in the mere fact that schooling is separate for many of the nation's children? Are children of the 1950's and 1960's so significantly different from children today that what once adversely affected their ability to learn, develop and thrive, now, does not produce the same effects, and does not represent a similarly harmful internalization of inferiority and disconnect from community? In the everyday experiences of American youth in schools, it does not matter that material and social deprivation was once legislated and is now the

outcome of an institutionalized and economic-based system of preferences and privileges. Further, the ways in which *Brown* has been *effective* in creating more integrated schools has not necessarily had a positive impact on black students or black communities (Gay, 2004; Hall, 2008). Gay (2004) describes at length the negative impacts of *Brown* in the destruction of the social cohesion and resources of African American families and communities; the loss of the collective power and expertise of black educators in all-black schools; and the loss of connectedness between African American students and their relationship to learning. For many African American students being bused into white schools after *Brown*, the quality of their education went down and knowledge was transformed from something that was connected "to how one lived" to information solely (Gay, 2004 citing hooks, 1994). Hall offers a succinct account of the unintended negative impacts of *Brown* largely as a result of misguided approaches to integration:

> [T]he initial course of action taken by the courts was *not* to financially equalize Black schools (via school curricula, teacher salaries, and building infrastructure) or to merge White students into them. Instead, the view of the Court was that wherever Black students were coming from was racially inferior and that the spaces they sought to occupy were culturally superior (Butler, 1996). And so witnessed were mandated thrusts of Black students into White academic arenas, which for some were tremendously hostile and violent (Martin, 1998; Ogletree, 2004). Bell (2004) points out, Black children "were shuffled in and out of predominantly white schools" and "all too often met naked race-hatred and curriculum blind to their needs" (p. 112). Furthermore, the courts' misguided approach to equal access and the alleged fostering of healthy Black identities

> came at the cost of Black school closings and consolidations, the loss of employment and status of Black teachers and principals in their respective communities, and the removal of Black students from their cultural spaces of connection, esteem and self-knowledge, which was negligently replaced with White curriculum and ideology (Karpinski, 2006; Ogletree, 2004). The impact of the above is still felt today (Hall, 2008, p. 44).

It would be wrong to downplay the significance of Brown or to argue that the Supreme Court decision was not somehow momentous; however, it would be equally wrong to propose that the ruling has been taken to heart and reflected in the equity of the current education system in the United States (Gay, 2004).

Brown is rightfully hailed as a landmark decision in United States legal history because few rulings have had such a lasting impact on the ethics of American governance and its stated social, political and economic obligations to its citizens. *Brown* elevates the importance of education in American society by establishing a quality education as a *necessary* component of modern life. As stated by Chief Justice Warren in 1954, education is the essential foundation for democratic participation, for economic success and for individual fulfillment.

> Today, education is perhaps the most important function of state and local governments. Compulsory school attendance laws and the great expenditures for education both demonstrate our recognition of the importance of education to our democratic society. It is required in the performance of our most basic public responsibilities, even service in the armed forces. It is the very foundation of good citizenship. Today it is a principal instrument in awakening the child to

> cultural values, in preparing him for later professional training, and in helping him to adjust normally to his environment. In these days, it is doubtful that any child may reasonably be expected to succeed in life if he is denied the opportunity of an education (*Brown*, 1954, n16).

It has been over 50 years since the Supreme Court's Chief Justice authored this Opinion on behalf of all justices regarding the unequivocal significance that quality education has in a youth's future and to democracy's continuation. Recently, Newt Gingrich (Republican, former Speaker of the House) concurred that a quality education was *still* the paramount civil right being fought for in America's public education system: "Education is the number one factor in our future prosperity. It's the number one factor in our national security, and it's the number one factor in these young people having a decent future […] this is the number one civil right of the twenty first century" (Fischer, 2009). If education is the number one civil right in the twenty first century, what does it mean that we have an education system that is largely as segregated and unequal in quality as it was before *Brown*? As Derrick Bell provocatively suggests, "for the millions of black and Latino children living in areas that are as racially isolated in fact as they once were by law" (2007, p. 18), is it time to "look elsewhere"—beyond an integrated public schooling system—for a quality education? How has social justice education texts and theory sought to address these issues of inequity and discrimination, and questions around the possibility of meaningful integration?

Impact on Curriculum & Instruction.

The impact of the Civil Rights Movement on education for social justice has been profound. As will be demonstrated in the next section, emphasis on communal

participation in the educational process, on multiculturalism and the inclusion of diverse viewpoints in curriculum, on storytelling and the preservation and celebration of students of color's histories and identities, and on social justice activism and student-led organizing, is in large part due to the influence of the Civil Rights Movement on an American sense of justice, particularly in education. Also, many of the important actors in the Civil Rights Movement have come to be important voices in the social justice education literature. Derrick Bell was an activist lawyer during the Movement and worked for the NAACP. He pioneered the inclusion of a race lens on legal studies, Critical Race Theory (CRT), and undergirded it with the practice of counter-storytelling to highlight the lives of oppressed people.[63] Both CRT and counter-storytelling become important aspects of social justice in education—that is, making students' lives the point of departure for curriculum and instruction, and bringing their world into the classroom.

[63] CRT began within the legal profession (1980s/1990s); however it has spread to other disciplines, particularly education, with a focus on standardized testing, discriminatory curriculum, classroom dynamics, and the out-of-school lives of students. See the work of Derrick Bell, Beverly Tatum, David Stovall and Gary Orfield for greater insight into the intersections of CRT and educational practice and scholarship.

II. Literature Review: Part 4: Dimensions of Social Justice Education

Social Justice Education

There is a breadth of texts in education pointedly written about social justice, but also several in the related areas of multicultural education and critical pedagogy that impact discussions and strategies for greater justice in classrooms and the public education system more broadly. It would be wrong to assume that more mainstream texts about teacher professional development and capacity, and student-centered instruction don't also advocate elements of education that align heavily with social justice principles. Furthermore, the theoretical work done in related fields such as school psychology and counseling, human development, sociology, political science, public policy, law/legal studies and cultural/media studies contribute heavily to the conceptualization of social justice education because of their contribution of/to theoretical frameworks like critical race theory (CRT). The expanse of strategies and entry points for talking about social justice and employing social justice in education is quite apparent. With that said, this study tries to present the interrelatedness of how issues of social justice occur at many levels within education—*structurally* at the national system, state and district level; *culturally* at the national, community, school and classroom level; *psychologically* at the school, classroom, and individual student level; and *economically* or materially at the national, community and individual level—while maintaining its particular focus. In context of this study, the sustained interest in examining social justice education is in understanding instruction and curriculum at the classroom level, and paying special attention to the perceptions, psychology and roll of the teacher. In the first section, Bell (1997) defines social justice education by looking at the essential problems that it strives

to address—the problems of persistent oppression. Other sections will follow that demonstrate the varying (but broadly complementary) entry points and conceptualizations of social justice amongst educators and educational theorists; these represent the key aspects of social justice that formulate the theoretical framework of this study.

Social Justice Education is against Oppression and Discrimination

Lee Anne Bell, in her chapter on the theoretical foundations of social justice education, describes social justice education as working directly counter to "the persistent and the everchanging aspects of oppression" (Bell, 1997, p. 3). In exploring the defining features of oppression, Bell explains the usage and meaning of the term.

> We use the term "oppression" rather than discrimination, bias, prejudice or bigotry to emphasize the pervasive nature of social inequality woven throughout social institutions as well as embedded within individual consciousness. Oppression fuses institutional and systemic discrimination, personal bigotry, and social prejudice in a complex web of relationships and structures that saturate most aspects of life in our society (Bell, 1997, p. 4).

In addition to its "pervasive nature", Bell identifies several other key features of oppression. Oppression is *restricting* in the structural and material constraints that it puts upon students lives shaping their chances and sense of possibility while stifling their self-development and self-determination; this dimension of oppression "delimits who one can imagine becoming and the power to act in support of one's rights and aspirations" (Bell 1997, p. 4). Oppression is also *hierarchical* in that "dominant or privileged groups benefit, often in unconscious ways, from the disempowerment of subordinated or targeted

groups" (Bell, 1997, p. 5). In education, this could speak to how white, affluent students more broadly benefit in an unequal system of funding that disproportionately funnels money to schools in richer areas. The aspect of oppression that deals with *complex, multiple cross-cutting relationships* relates to individual students' identities and their consequential relationship to power and privilege, which is relative since "individuals hold multiple and cross-cutting social group memberships" (Bell, 1997, p. 5). This means that a black, male student of middle class background might have varying experiences with power and privilege both in and out of school due to the intersection of his age, gender, race and economic status. Oppression is also *internalized* meaning it "resides not only in external social institutions but also within the human psyche"; "[o]ppresive beliefs are internalized by victims as well as benefactors" (Bell, 1997, p. 5). For example, a Latina student might internalize the same derogatory beliefs about communities of Latin heritage as are espoused by media, other societal entities or even her teacher. This internalization could potentially hurt her relationships with her own community, family and damage her sense of self. The other feature of oppression discussed is the "isms"; the way oppression has become systemic and solidified for groups of people based on varying plains of identity like race, ethnicity, religion, sexuality, gender, class and physical ability or disability. An examination of the "isms"—like racism, sexism, ableism and classism—necessitates looking at "the dimensions of experience that connect 'isms' in an overarching system of domination" while retaining an understanding of their "distinctive qualities"; there are ways in which "historical and social contexts… distinguish one form of oppression from another" (Bell, 1997, pp. 5-6).

Bell emphasizes that the many "common sense" assumptions of American society makes these varying aspects of oppression difficult to see clearly (Bell, 1997, p. 3). In response, the study of history is essential to being able to trace and discern the patterns of oppression over time that "are often invisible in daily life but which reflect systemic aspects of" how oppression "functions in different periods and contexts"; studying the past "enables us to see the long-standing grievances of different groups in our society" as valid (Bell, 1997, p. 3 & 6). Common sense notions about different groups (e.g. stereotypes) have a social legacy, and historical context is vital to knowing "how stereotypes develop in one context with particular meanings, and continue as unquestioned fact down through the ages" (Bell, 1997, p. 6). Bell emphasizes that a key aspect of understanding oppression is tracing discriminatory ideas about groups of people over time. These ideas solidify into societal "common sense" that is so ingrained into the logic of dominant culture that it legitimizes the unequal treatment of people in a way that is pervasive and, at times, unconscious. Historical knowledge and a deep understanding of the different dimensions of oppression can also offer "hope as well as evidence that oppressive circumstances can change through the efforts of human actors" (Bell 1997, p. 6).

The complexity with which Bell describes oppression illuminates the breadth of social ills and injustices that social justice education can attempt to rectify. Building upon this thick description of the problems of oppression facing students, social justice education must encompass students feeling that the school space and curriculum help them to explore and address what is deficient, unfulfilling or marginalizing in their everyday experiences and in society, more broadly. Discrimination in educational policy

writ large (in terms of funding, districting, enforcement of standards, etc.) and discrimination in individual school's policies and practices undermine this purpose of social justice in education. One of the primary questions regarding the maintenance of social justice in schools is: "How can schools create learning environments that genuinely recognize and embrace every student despite race, class, gender, religion, learning style and sexual identity?" (Hall, 2006 b, p.151). In his article on Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) youth, and classroom discrimination (2006 b), Hall notes a gap between schools' written or articulated policies, and its' practices. While school policies might be aimed at guaranteeing equity and establishing nurturing learning environments, those ideals are not always reflected in the reality of their outcomes. School policies that explicitly articulate equity and advocate for anti-discrimination practices (in order to protect students of a particular minority group whether racial, ethnic or sexual) can be ineffective in their execution and fall short in their implementation. "[P]olicy implementation does not always bring about change in mindsets" and "attitudes of school personnel" can diminish "the effectiveness that anti-discrimination policies are meant to have" (Hall b, 2006, p. 152). The evident gulf between official assurances of equity and anti-discrimination in schools, and the reality experienced by several students, particularly students of color, is troubling. Another example is the discriminatory characterization and treatment of African American students within Chicago Public Schools (CPS).

> Investigating academic and administrative problems for CPS, researchers provided a myriad of negative descriptions implying 'pathological behavior' of African American students. Contrary to the offered popular assumptions, we

> must acknowledge the pathological construct as ahistorical. […] Presently, the "distinct social problems" observed are recognized as the systemic structures of racism. As a complex system that regulates, marginalizes, and subjugates people of color to various oppressions, […] its effects are often internalized (Stovall, 2005, p. 100).

Students, whose social identities contribute to their marginalized position within society, are at increased risk for suffering the same marginalization in schools because of the interrelated relationship between society and schooling, the socially reproductive quality of schooling, and schools' legitimating power in society (Hall, 2006 b; Ferguson, 2000; Kozol, 2005; Kunjufu, 2005; Stovall, 2005). If racism is justified in educational practice, it becomes part of societal wisdom—its "common sense"—regarding groups or people with particular social identities (in the cases above, "pathological" African American youth or LGBT youth). In these above instances, black or homosexual students may come to internalize the logic of a system that portrays them as pathological or deficient. The perceived legitimacy of institutions, such as schools, can enable such schools to normalize these discriminatory ideas in the minds of the very students they are marginalizing; schools play a potentially paramount role in instilling in their students the value systems that position various groups of people as deficient and "at risk". Hall perceptibly explains the danger of condoned and selective discrimination of particular students within schools: "As homophobia goes unchecked in classrooms and hallways, educators send the general message that discrimination of any person or group is acceptable" (2006, p. 152). Social justice necessitates a commitment in both dialogue

and practice to ensuring equity and acceptance for all students, so that their learning environments can be safe and relevant to all students' needs.

Unfortunately, school rules are one dimension in which many students are treated unequally and unfairly—contributing to schools' rightful depiction as sorting and ranking systems that are designed to produce a hierarchy of students that too often reflects social hierarchies in society more broadly (Ferguson, 2000; Spring, 1989) As Ferguson and Kunjufu explore in their research, both school disciplinary policies and special education criteria act in tandem to disproportionately stigmatize and classify as "at risk" black boys (Ferguson, 2000; Kunjufu, 2005). An examination of school rules can demonstrate how "the process of… social difference is created and reproduced in schools" valorizing a few "gifted" students at the top and demonizing "a large number who are stigmatized as failures" and get placed at the bottom (Ferguson, 2000, p. 50). Prioritizing adherence to school rules (e.g. conformity and obedience) over the application of school disciplinary policy for the primary purpose of increased learning, some schools' punishing, surveillance-laden environment suggests that administrators and teachers are more interested in readying students of color for prison than for rigorous academic careers (Boyd, 2009; Ferguson, 2000). "How unfortunate it is that so many African American boys are having their spirits destroyed because some teachers believe in that approach to education and classroom discipline. Black boys are not horses, and they don't need to be broken down"(Kunjufu 2005, p. xi). Kunjufu points out "the track record for the 'break him down then build him up' approach in regular and special education has not served the African American male student well at all" (2005, p. ix).

Far from its ultimate mission as a vehicle that bolsters or empowers marginalized students toward creating social change, one key aspect of social justice in education seems to simply combat schooling's often harmful effects on students, communities and, hence, society. As Stanley Aronowitz observed, this is "at best following the dictum of the medical profession, the school manages to 'first, do no harm" (1998, p. 3). This seems hardly enough toward rectifying larger social inequities. The work of the above researchers suggests that schooling is pervasively discriminatory and in its many dimensions of oppressiveness "miseducates" a diversity of students. As Derrick Bell points out, in terms of the education system of the United States, much also needs to change at the national level to fulfill social justice education's goal of being anti-discrimination and anti-oppression. As was mentioned in the last section on the legacy of *Brown*, affirmative action and other desegregation policies aimed at educational equity and inclusiveness are being repealed; sadly, "a majority of the current court is determined to strike down laws or policies intended to remedy past and continuing racial discrimination" in schools (Bell, 2007, p. 15).

Social Justice Education is Multicultural

The work of Linda Darling-Hammond and her graduate students in *Learning to Teach for Social Justice* (2002) raises many of the issues confronting in-service and pre-service teachers attempting to conceive and implement strategies for teaching and embodying social justice in the classroom. Particularly, one can surmise from the book that social justice education is necessarily multicultural; it embraces diversity and the tensions that come from building a learning community that moves beyond mere tolerance of difference to acceptance and the celebration of diversity. Like social justice

education, multicultural education wrestles with issues of diversity, cultural conflict, and disparities in educational outcomes, and it similarly relies upon a rich body of anti-racist and decolonialization literature (Gay, 2003).

> Multicultural education is integral to improving the academic success of students of color and preparing all youths for democratic citizenship in a pluralistic society. Students need to understand how multicultural issues shape the social, political, economic and cultural fabric of the United States as well as how such issues fundamentally influence their personal lives (Gay, 2003, p. 30).

The necessity of addressing issues of diversity in education responds to the "changing landscape of America's schools" and economic, political and cultural globalization, which means multiculturalism is as important to white students' in their ability to participate in a democratic, inclusive and increasingly global society as it is for students of color (Banks, 2002, p. xi). While some classrooms in the United States reflect the growing diversity of the country, others—especially along the plains of race and class—demonstrate the continuing separate nature of schooling in the U.S. where frequently urban and minority students are isolated into schools where upwards of ninety percent of the student population share the same racial identity and economic class status (a number of Chicago Public Schools are examples of this reality). There is a parallel between segregated public places and social spaces, and segregated minds with the inability to understand "our shared human thread" (Hall, 2008, p. 48). Consequently, a multicultural education might be just as important to helping students transcend social exclusion and political isolation as it is to presenting students with the opportunity to transcend difference within their classrooms.

Banks (2002) distills multicultural education into five (5) dimensions: 1. *Content integration*: texts and materials in the curriculum that build a multicultural perspective in the classroom, meaning they originate from various people and places and convey differing lenses on the world that transcend that of dominant culture; 2. *Knowledge construction process*: materials and classroom instruction helps students to understand and make explicit the way knowledge in a particular content area is created and valued; 3. *Prejudice reduction*: instruction and classroom conversation emphasizes dignity and respect for all people, helping "students to develop positive intergroup attitudes and behaviors"; 4. *Equity pedagogy*: teachers modify their instructional strategies to assist students from varying language, racial, cultural and socio-economic backgrounds; 5. *Empowering school culture and structure*: the total environment of the school conveys equal status for students with diverse social identities (Banks 2002, p. x). What Banks makes explicit is that teaching for social justice is a learning process for teachers; it takes the acquisition of certain knowledge, attitudes and skills that must be cultivated in teacher education programs and reflected upon in instructional practice (Banks 2002). Without concerted effort on the part of practitioners to embody social justice through the five dimensions of multicultural education, employ the necessary strategies for addressing them in the classroom on an ongoing basis, and model them to their students, it is likely the pervading stereotypes and systems that unequally structure schooling and education for students will persist at the classroom and school level. Yet, the barriers to having the conversations—the dialogue—around diversity issues (that contribute to the commitment and understanding necessary to building a more socially just school) are often large and such dialogue is seemingly threatening to school faculty and administration especially

when it requires frank language about race, class and sexuality. Different experiences and understandings about the world and the purposes of education can cause conflict; diverse perspectives amongst teacher faculty can lead to conflicting ideas that must be reconciled or navigated (Banks, 2002). However, the way in which these conversations has the ability to serve as reflection on practice and potentially alter it, means that dialogue amongst school faculty and practitioners can be social change in of itself (Banks 2002).

Darling-Hammond points out that teaching is a moral and political act influencing the possibility for social change (2002, p. 2). The persistent realities of segregated education in the United States impacting students of varying social classes and racial identities, also impact teachers' preparedness to instruct students and their effectiveness in doing so. These realities that have resulted in unequal educations for today's students are largely the same as those that structured the educations experienced by pre-service and in-service teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2002, p. 3). Teachers' understanding of education is shaped by their own experiences; within their educational histories, teachers' lack of experience with people from diverse backgrounds and learning styles can hurt their present ability to see their students clearly (especially across racial, ethnic and class boundaries), potentially leaving many educational opportunities within their classrooms unexamined (Darling-Hammond, 2002, p. 2-3). In this way, awareness of difference and its significance to learning becomes a crucial piece of teaching for social justice. Teachers need to develop the ability to see their students individually—tying their understanding of students to knowledge of the facets of their students' lives and identities (Darling-Hammond, 2002, p. 10). Otherwise, in the absence of this empathy

(meaning the capacity and commitment to understand students at an intimate level), assumptions and stereotypes can play a large role in teachers' determination of students' abilities, in teachers' interpretation of the quality of their students' learning and participation, and in teachers' setting of classroom expectations. Teachers must investigate within their classrooms to gain understanding of their students' perspectives while simultaneously developing an appropriate lens for understanding their own experience that leads them away from prejudice and the desire to "otherize" (Darling-Hammond, 2002, p. 4) students. In answering the question of "Does who we are influence how we teach?" French explains how dynamic dialogue on race, class, gender and sexuality can serve to broaden one's perspective beyond one's own social identity cultivating the ability to see the relationship between one's identity and privilege, and one's identity and oppression (French, 2002).

The significance of both teachers' and students' identities in the classroom is emphasized throughout the book. Trandt's chapter poses the question "Can white, middle class teachers teach a diversity of students?" It is concluded that diversity does impact learning and that insensitivity or misinterpretation of students can be a large factor in their underperformance and disengagement from school. However, and for this very reason, it is of most importance to students that their teachers have *empathy*. Where empathy is perceived to be correlated with having a similar social identity, students might feel that a shared identity with their teacher is important (Trandt, 2002). However, teaching is itself, a form of cultural exchange (Cymrot, 2002). Schools are whole new worlds of assumptions and habits within which students must become accustomed and proficient (Cymrot, 2002). What is of the greatest significance is that empathy drives

teacher practice so that treating students equally does not mean treating students "the same". Treating all students "the same" is at the cost of some students whose needs differ from those with which the teacher most easily identifies (Cymrot 2002, p.15). Students, particularly those from marginalized communities, need to have their experiences, histories and voices validated in the classroom so that their educational experience does not reproduce the power dynamics present in society writ large (Garcia 2002). "The classroom is one of the primary arenas where students learn the language of power and understand the nature of the culture they live in—if they aren't empowered in the classroom, they are unlikely to feel connected to the larger society either" (Garcia 2002, p. 27).

The inclusion of a diversity of people's experiences and histories in curricular texts and materials is crucial to cultivating empowerment amongst students and the development of their own criticality and voice (Pettis-Renwick, 2002). This can be especially true for students who come from marginalized communities that have possibly, over time, internalized dominant ideas about the insignificance of their communities' histories or struggles. Alternatively, the exclusion of one's people or community from the history and broader school curriculum can have a harmful effect.[64] When history is

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[64] Winter Pettis-Renwich's reflection on the impact her own education's lack of cultural inclusion had on her desire to learn, her identity development and beliefs about the purpose of education is an example. "I believe the need to learn a sense of one's self is one of the most important purposes of education… As a woman of African American descent I had experienced public education at a time when there was little cultural relevancy in the classroom. In my history class, the curriculum was strong and thorough in the transmission of White American history, ideals and attitudes; however, I learned little about people or values that I might identify as my own… The resulting deep sense of exclusion was apparent when I dropped out of high school. Now, years later, I was returning to finish my education… the exposure to more diverse perspectives at college, and memories of my own school experience encouraged me to consider teaching as a way

presented in an "important people only" format—that is, as the study of people from dominant cultures who accomplish acts deemed worthy of inclusion in written history—students may begin to feel excluded from their role in history (Pettis-Renwick, 2002, p. 33).

Exploring one's own perception of events and experiences can be an important starting point for students in developing a deeper understanding of history (Pettis-Renwick, 2002). When students get to share their experiences in the classroom it often generates interest in learning as they have the opportunity to collectively consider "the roles we all play in history" (Pettis-Renwick, 2002, p. 33). The presentation of "rich history" through the use of diverse texts can "invite students into the historical dialogue and allow them to connect with the essential ideas of history" (Pettis-Renwick, 2002, p. 32). Alternatively, "lack of access to equitable information" about the notable achievements of people with which students identify can lead to students' feelings of disconnection from society and their communities, a devaluation of their peoples' accomplishments and struggles, and a disillusionment with the study of history itself (Pettis-Renwich, 2002, p. 33). Therefore, cultural inclusion in the study of history particularly, but also in other subjects ranging from Literature to Mathematics to Fine Arts, "can be a key to maintaining students' interest in and commitment to school" (Pettis-Renwich, 2002, p. 33). "[E]ducators must systematically weave multicultural education into the central core curriculum" and instruction of "reading, math, science, and social studies" (Gay, 2003, p. 32).

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to bring equity and cultural relevance to the classroom. I realized that I wanted to work with students like myself: those who felt excluded from public education and had not been encouraged to develop a sense of their own competence" (2002, p. 31).

Assumptions about students' lives and individual identities are the "most treacherous" aspect of the classroom; they can impact teacher perception of students' learning capacities and preferences (Garcia, 2002, p. 27). Teachers must exercise caution in indentifying students as members of a group and then utilizing that group identity to form assumptions about a student's perspective or experiences. Inaccurate assumptions can lead teachers to treat students in a certain way that can impact students' sense of self and capacity to learn (Garcia, 2002). Garcia states: "One of my strongest fears about how diversity issues are raised within teacher education programs is that developing teachers could view the information as applicable to all students of a certain group" (2002, p. 28). The privilege of being seen as an individual is something that is often only afforded to members of a dominant racial or ethnic group but is, in fact, how all students deserve to be considered by their teachers (Garcia, 2002). Garcia rightfully points out that "[t]he idea of treating people as members of groups without really getting to know who they are seems counterproductive to the idea of being able effectively to create a student-centered environment by structuring lessons around the particular needs of learners" (p. 25). In other words, assumptions tied to identity groups can work against teachers' efforts to understand their students as learners. One implication is that teacher attempts at including relevant texts, materials and histories of groups with which they believe their students identify must be informed with actual knowledge of their students' identities and students' perceptions.

As explored above, it is important for teachers to understand how students' learning is impacted by the content of their experiences in order to strategize around how to make classroom learning more relevant to students (Darling-Hammond & Garcia-

Lopez, 2002; Gay, 2003). However, relevancy is only a piece of curriculum development and classroom instruction—it must be tied to the building and utilization of academic skills.

> Students need to apply such major academic skills as data analysis, problem solving, comprehension, inquiry, and effective communication as they study multicultural events. For instance, students should not simply memorize facts about major events involving ethnic groups, such as civil rights movements, social justice efforts, and cultural accomplishments. Instead, educators should teach students how to think critically and analytically about these events, propose alternative solutions to social problems, and demonstrate understanding… (Gay, 2003, p. 32).

The classroom itself must be an environment that encourages intellectual risk-taking and is built upon a climate of trust (Darling-Hammond & Garcia-Lopez, 2002). Establishing a safe classroom for students can be aided by the recognition of students' voice, the creation of norms of respect, and the choice of curriculum materials (Trandt, 2002). Equally important, at the core of teaching for social justice is that teachers must be able to teach! They must have expertise (specific and deep knowledge—particular to their content area), practical skills, the ability to differentiate instruction based on students' needs, and the ability to bend content to students' experiences so that learning is both relevant and *rigorous* (Darling-Hammond, 2002). Certainly social justice cannot be served by providing students an education that does not include the academic skills, content, and rigor that will enable them to have equal access to employment, college entry, the political process and other significant aspects of society.

Social Justice Education is Student and Community Centered

Many educational texts that are concerned with social justice for minority and marginalized youth value heavily local, community-based knowledge and encourage teachers to develop a curriculum that is relevant to students' identities, needs and goals (Freire, 1998, 2005/1970, 2005/1974; Hall, 2006 a; Stovall, 2005). These texts suggest that an educator cannot hope to unpack or address injustices experienced by students without being student-centered in approach. One aspect of being youth-centered or student-centered is getting to know who students are. Quite simply, "[b]efore you can educate somebody, you got to deal with what the issues are" at the center of their identity and experience (Stovall, 2005, p. 101). Hall advocates for educational spaces that prioritize getting to know students as individuals noting that too frequently cultural misconceptions result in disciplinary action and negative treatment (2006 a). Another aspect of student-centered education is valuing the knowledge, skills and experiences that youth bring with them to the classroom and educational settings by allowing them to co-construct the learning environment (Hall, 2006 a; Stovall, 2005). As unique individuals with a host of experiences, students are not simply a compilation of their social identity markers (white, poor, bisexual, etc.). While social identities may significantly construct some students' realities, they in no way define or account for who students are in totality. A dismissal of both the assets and challenges students bring to a classroom can represent a disregard for the worth of students' intellects and points of view. It further suggests that education can be universally conceived and is not intended to be unique or relevant to the individual but holds the same value for all students, in all contexts. It is only from a deeper understanding of the learners in their classroom, that teachers can feel

empowered to share power in the learning process and foster a more democratic classroom environment. Hall explores the necessary change in mindset and risk involved in teachers' relinquishing of absolute power in the classroom:

> It is ironic that in American society we advance democratic ideals, while in our schools and classrooms we promote dictatorships […] From years of working in public schools both as a teacher and a mentor, I am well aware of the power that teachers possess as the authority figure. While we can be attentive, caring, sensitive, and loving practitioners, we can also be strict, judgmental, cruel, and controlling autocrats. While it is sometimes easy for us to confuse authority with omnipotence, we must try to break away from the "my way or the highway" mentality that is pervasive in teaching and instruction. Instead, we must make the attempt to subordinate ourselves and come to see schools and classrooms as ethical sites, where students can be the creators of their own learning experience and teachers can be the facilitators of that knowledge [… and consequently] classrooms become less dominated by adult authority and more youth-centered and focused. The objective is to construct learning environments that foster youth empowerment, free expression, self-discipline, and self respect (2006 a, p. 25).

The process of building a relationship with students so that mutual understanding and trust are present enough to co-construct a learning environment can appear intimidating and time consuming to teachers. However, there is no substitution for the process and, it is not an addendum to the standards that define quality learning (Gay, 2003).

If internal or external pressures prevent teachers from using instructional time to investigate the identity of their students and the qualities of their students' lives, if they

prevent students from expressing their stories or sharing their experiences, these pressures can lead to extremely ineffective learning environments (Gay, 2003; Hall, 2006 a; Kozol, 2005; Pettis-Renwich, 2002). Consequently, being student-centered is a rejection of the universal assumptions and approaches to curriculum and teaching that would have one believe that all students learn in the same manner, are lacking the same material, and should be instructed in the same way. Further, being holistic or multidimensional in one's approach to students' education means that teachers are not just concerned with the skill sets and content knowledge of students but their full development—their *entire intellect*—which cannot be unmarried from a positive sense of self, an ability to empathize and form meaningful interpersonal relationships, and a confidence in one's own learning capacities and talents (Hall, 2006 a).

The breadth of diversity and uniqueness amongst students in the United States affirms that they are *not* blank slates to be marked, bare canvases to be painted or empty "receptacles" to be "filled" with knowledge (Freire, 2005/1970, p. 72). A mechanical way of seeing the purpose and process of education is misguided and counter to a multicultural vision of schooling; it is what Paulo Freire describes as the *banking concept of education* (Freire, 2005/1970).

> In the banking concept of education, knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing. Projecting an absolute ignorance onto others […] The teacher presents himself to his students as their necessary opposite; by considering their ignorance absolute, he justifies his own existence (Freire, 2005/1970, p. 72).

Freire exposes as mistaken the conceptualizations of education that presume that students bring a lack of knowledge with them to school, and that students' knowledge gleaned from lived experiences and their communities and families is of no worth in the classroom (2005/1970). Education of this kind maintains a hierarchical relationship between students and teachers in the classroom—the student is positioned continuously as the unknowing party and the teacher as all-knowing (Freire, 2005/1970). The "teacher-student contradiction", as Freire calls it, parallels the domination that many marginalized students and communities experience in society (Freire, 2005/1970, p. 71). Teacher-student power differences in schools are not only exhibited by *who* holds overt power and influence within the classroom space, but also are demonstrated in more subversive ways as part of a hidden curriculum. Particularly, injustice can be embedded in the assumptions about who possesses knowledge that is of value. Such assumptions regarding what is valuable knowledge and with whom it resides can dehumanize some students can signify one of the most discriminatory aspects of formal education. The exclusivity of who possesses knowledge can inhibit students' realization of their own potential as natural teachers and organic intellectuals, especially when knowledge is portrayed as only residing in adults, males, whites, heterosexuals, or upper and middle class individuals.

Instead of seeing knowledge as coming from multiple sources and places, Freire argues that too frequently education posits that knowledge is narrowly defined and comes directly and solely from the teacher. "Education is suffering from narration sickness. The teacher talks about reality as if it were motionless, static, compartmentalized, and predictable… His task is to fill students with the contents of his narration" (Freire,

2005/1970, p. 71). Schooling's character, as an oft one-way narrative, limits its potential to be transformative for both students and teachers by rigidly prescribing what counts as knowledge and the way in which that knowledge can be transmitted. Particularly, this conception of schooling constrains the transformative potential of students' and teachers' own stories, as vessels of knowledge, within classroom spaces. Further, the current narrative sickness of student-teacher interactions rewards students' docility in the learning process by turning them into "containers" or "receptacles" and "[t]he more meekly the receptacles permit themselves to be filled, the better students they are" (Freire, 2005/1970, p. 72). In other words, such education encourages students to be inactive thinkers, but proactive consumers of others' thoughts.

The banking concept of education and the narrative character of the teacher-student relationship also impact the quality and purpose of school curriculum. When curriculum is foreign, lacks relevance, or is bereft of meaning to students, education has diminished potential to transform the conditions of students' lives. Ayers (1992) accuses much of the curriculum within schools as deficient and "packaged", meaning "it is the product of someone else's thought, knowledge, experience, and imagination" (p. 259). Ayers suggests that teachers relinquish the significance of their role within students' lives when they utilize prefabricated curriculum and in the process, become merely clerks or custodians to a larger educational system that knows little of their classroom context (1992). One of Ayers main objections to "packaged" curriculum is it is designed around a focus on student deficiency. It operationalizes educational programming for the purpose of compensating for students' gaps in knowledge and perceived inadequacies. Presumptions about inadequacy and deficiency found within curriculum and school

policy encompass not only students but often extend into their homes and communities. Schools are accused by some social justice educators, such as Ayers and Freire, as devaluing the sources of knowledge that are particular to students' lives. Alternatively, Ayers suggests that educators "can fight for a stance of interconnection" with communities and "can integrate an understanding that the people with the problems are also the people with the solutions, and that experience (our own as well as others') is a powerful teacher if we will only wake up and pay attention" (Ayers, 1992, p. 262). The devaluing of family and community wisdom is counter to the dignity that social justice demands for all individuals and is ineffective in sustaining the social change for which the marginalized hope (Freire, 1998, 2005/1970). To combat injustice and achieve lasting change in society, educational communities must be in solidarity with marginalized communities in which schools reside and from which students come. Unity is required for the benefit of students hoping to change the conditions of their marginalization and to uplift others. Curriculum as an extension of community-based knowledge and as a response to students' assets and objectives is conceived of as essential to a social justice project in schools.

Social Justice Education is Critical and Liberating

The legacy of educational theorist Paulo Freire has aided in the subsequent development of a breadth of educational texts on critical literacy, critical consciousness and liberation education that are closely tied to the achievement of social justice through education.[65] Freire's philosophy of education blends a Marxist criticism of capitalism

[65] Donaldo Macedo, Peter McLaren, bell hooks and Henry Giroux are some notable educational theorists who have written works on critical literacy and pedagogy and claim Freire as a major influence (Macedo, 1998; McLaren, 2007)

and exploitation with the decolonization philosophy of Fanon, Sartre and others (Freire, 1998, 2005/1970, 2005/1974). Donaldo Macedo remarked:

> Reading Pedagogy of the Oppressed gave me a language to critically understand the tensions, contradictions, fears, doubts, hopes and deferred dreams that are part and parcel of living a borrowed and colonized cultural existence […] Reading Pedagogy of the Oppressed gave me the critical tools to reflect on, and understand, the process through which we come to know what it means to be at the periphery of the intimate yet fragile relationship between colonizer and the colonized (2005, p. 11).

Texts on critical pedagogy, critical literacy and liberation education suggest that teachers dedicated to social justice utilize curriculum and instruction to empower students to think critically about their distinctive experiences and position within their families, communities and society. Transformative or liberation education operates based on "[t]he idea […] that school is not meant to replace the family or community at large. Instead, it should be an extension of both." (Stovall, 2005, p. 100). This means that liberation education is, in language and approach, a departure from many versions of urban schooling that repeatedly articulate that students and communities are the problem—deficient, ignorant, violent, and "at risk". Alternatively, liberation education, tied to a social justice mission, would suggest that *society* at large is deficient and its institutions impoverish and marginalize groups of people who then must struggle with the violence and challenges that come with that oppression.

Critical literacy is an extension of a key component of Freire's notion of "praxis" which consists of the dynamic relationship between a critical reading of one's world and

reflective action. A "revolutionary praxis" is educating youth for social revolution to achieve a more radical democracy that holds socialist values of the community above that which capitalism makes possible (McLaren, 2007, p. xviii). Critical literacy is in essence the refined ability to read one's world and see clearly one's participation in society's construction. Participation is, then, imbued with a deep consciousness of the possibility of one's actions on the making of history and re-making of one's social environment. Critical literacy's purpose is to make evident the ramifications of action and inaction in the community and on society through the building of students' consciousness of their role. In this way, critical literacy has a social justice goal of empowering marginalized students to see and develop solutions to problems of systemic injustice "the real roots" of which remain "inexorably entangled in the everyday lives of the students and their families" (McLaren, 2007, p. xviii).

A key aspect of critical literacy is teachers' modeling (through instruction) how to deconstruct and reconstruct the world (e.g. "critical habits of the mind") through developing curriculum that illuminates the way in which knowledge is created—it's construction (Shor, 1992 cited by Wallowitz, 2008, p.225). Exposing the construction of knowledge means illuminating "the highly contextualized nature of all knowledge, the inherent bias in all disciplines, and our responsibility to continually question what we read, hear, and think" (Wallowtiz, 2008, p. 228). Hence, teaching critical literacy is beyond the trend in education to teach content-area literacy and critical thinking skills (Mulcahy, 2008). Literacy as a term in education is "no longer viewed as merely a set of skills one must master, but as a set of practices, beliefs and values as well as a way of being in the world" (Mulcahy, 2008, p. 15). All forms of literacy, therefore, teach values

and beliefs and when "we engage in the teaching of a content area literacy, we need to be cognizant of the kinds of literacies we are teaching toward" (Mulcahy, 2008, p. 16); therefore, content areas (e.g. disciplines) as arenas of knowledge encompass their own value-systems and presumptions about the ways and means by which knowledge is created or discovered. What distinguishes critical literacy from other forms of literacy? Mulcahy explains it is in how critical literacy "addresses issues of power, social injustice, and transformative action" (2008, p. 16). How is critical literacy taught in the classroom?

> Critical literacy is a mindset; it is a way of viewing and interacting with the world, not a set of teaching skills and strategies…critical literacy is a philosophy that recognizes the connections between power, knowledge, language, and ideology, and recognizes the inequalities and injustices surrounding us in order to move toward transformative action and social justice. In order to do so, critical literacy examines texts in order to identify and challenge social constructs, underlying assumptions and ideologies, and power structures that intentionally or unintentionally perpetuate social inequalities and injustices. Furthermore, it examines the way in which texts use language to position readers, transmit information, and perpetuate the status quo. Critical literacy aims to delve deeply into the sociopolitical and sociocultural issues embedded in texts in order to identify the root causes of social inequities (Mulcahy, 2008, p. 16).

Critical literacy is different from critical thinking in that it is transformative and working toward praxis; thus, simply "analyzing a text or being asked to think critically does not mean one is engaging in critical literacy" (Mulcahy, 2008, p. 16). Critical literacy seeks to disrupt the "commonplace", interrogate multiple viewpoints, and take action to

promote social justice; these dimensions of critical literacy align closely with "Freire's notion of a liberating education, which allows one to problem-pose, engage in dialogue, and examine the world in a way that uncovers social oppressions and encourages people to understand the ways in which their world can be transformed" (Mulcahy, 2008, p. 18).

Critical educators affirm that education, the teaching of skills and knowledge, is far from neutral—"nothing that can be observed or named is ideologically neutral […] no thoughts, ideas or theories are transparent, autonomous, or free floating" (McLaren 2007, p. xix). Freire suggests that it is only "clever uses of dominant ideology" that suggest that classrooms can be possibly neutral spaces that do not "inculcate in the students political attitudes and practices, as if it were possible to exist as a human being in the world and at the same time be neutral" (1998, p. 90). Rather, education and teaching is a form of *intervention* in the world, and should as a human act be for the practice of democracy and justice (Freire, 1998). Those committed to critical literacy maintain that it is "irresponsible as educators if we stop short of equipping students with the means to recognize how they are being positioned—or manipulated—by homogenizing texts and the written and spoken word as students negotiate it in all aspects of their academic and nonacademic lives" (Wallowitz, 2008, p. 225). Consequently, critical literacy is teaching students how to be conscious participants in their own lives.

Adopting a *critical pedagogy* requires that teachers not only build students' ability to think analytically, but that teachers themselves develop critical consciousness when it comes to reflecting on their practice.[66] Teachers for social justice approach their

[66] McLaren describes critical pedagogy as an "an approach to schooling that is committed to the imperatives of empowering students and transforming the larger social order in the interests of justice and equality (2007, p. xvii).

pedagogy with the concept of revolutionary praxis—how is their instruction and curriculum educating youth for the possibility of building a more just, community-oriented society? Freire contends a teacher is an intrinsically political presence, whom students cannot ignore and who either succeeds or fails in transmitting the "capacity to analyze, to compare, to evaluate, to decide, to opt, to break with" injustice (1998, p. 90). Part of critical reflection on practice is teachers thinking about their own identity in context of the world and how that impacts their teaching. This can be a challenging and disheartening endeavor, especially for some teachers, as developing "[t]he understanding of one's historical and privileged position requires a great deal of political clarity" (Macedo 1998, p. xxx). Macedo points out that for white liberal educators the theorizing of their practice can be especially important to the interruption of the reproduction of social injustices in the classroom space.

> By not theorizing their practice, the white liberal educators shield themselves from the self-critical reflection that could interrogate, among other things, how maintenance of their privilege invariably makes them complicit with the dominant ideology that creates the need for them to engage in various forms of practice in oppressed communities (Macedo, 1998, p. xxxi).

Regardless of their racial, ethnic and class identity, a commitment to critical pedagogy necessitates educators' reflection upon practice and continual exploration of the values and ideas they convey in their instruction and curriculum. This positions teachers as constant learners. Freire argues "the source of our capacity to teach" is "our capacity to learn" and that learning should be a creative endeavor, a reciprocal process between student and teacher in the classroom—"to learn is to construct, to reconstruct, to observe

with a view to changing—none of which can be done without being open to risk, to the adventure of the spirit" (1998, p. 67). Developing critical consciousness, or being critically conscious for both students and educators, speaks to the understanding—the way of seeing the world—that comes from critical literacy. This way of seeing permeates one's everyday life and leads to a sustained understanding of one's participation in the world and one's capacity for making history.

> A critical perspective on literacy demands that students not only engage in deconstruction but reconstruction. That is, students should be producers of knowledge, not just passive receivers. Freire reminds teachers that students learn to read the word in order to rewrite a more inclusive, just world (Wallowitz 2008, p. 228).

In short, critical consciousness is at the heart of liberation education—the ability to deconstruct, for the purpose of reconstructing society.

Social Justice Education is Activism and Reform for Equity

In a conceptualization of social justice as liberation education, built upon Freire's notion of *praxis*, critical consciousness must be complimented by reflective action. Not surprisingly, critical, multicultural and social justice educators often advocate for greater social activism in schools. In terms of social justice in education, activism is "aimed at increasing inclusivity, fairness, empowerment, and equity and fairness, especially for heretofore oppressed and silenced groups" (Marshall & Anderson 2009, p. 12). A few actions identified with social justice activism in schools are: operating from a critical perspective in the classroom thereby "disrupting" and "reframing" (Marshall & Anderson 2009, p. 20) dominant knowledge ; studying civil rights movements and philosophy

linked to other existent theories on liberation like Marxism; and exploring critical theories and frameworks developed from the perspectives of marginalized groups such as Critical Race Theory (CRT), Critical Latino/a Theory (CritLat), Queer Theory and Feminist theories (Marshall & Anderson, 2009). Others discuss social justice pedagogy as explicit instruction and the transmission of skills, language, and social norms that students will need to gain greater access to careers, college and public spaces tied to a culture of power (Delpit, 1995).

Within education, "there is generally a clear moral dimension to activism; the focus is on improving education for all students through changes in practices, policies, or curriculum" (Marshall & Anderson, 2009, p. 12). However, not all teachers respond to or interpret this moral call in the same way or to the same degree. Research findings suggest that there are "different reasons for and different ways of enacting change" for social justice; teachers' activism has been "at times hidden, at times overt; reasons for acting included role expectations, a spiritual calling, personal experiences, and deeply embedded identity issues" (Marshall & Anderson, 2009, p. 14). Thus, simply stating that teachers should engage in social movements for justice does little to account for the varied responses amongst teachers to employing social justice in their classrooms or schools. On a whole, it appears that identity significantly impacts activist choices: "the kind of activism (individual or collective) one might choose to get involved with, the level and extent of participation, and the selection of social networks within a movement" (Marshall & Anderson 2009, p. 14).

Beyond teacher identity, what are the other factors or influences on activism? Perhaps, almost just as influential as the teacher identity itself, is the context in which

teachers teach—the regional, political and sociocultural features of their schools and districts, as well as the culture of the profession of teaching (Marshall & Anderson 2009). Marshall & Anderson (2009) conducted a study asking whether it is really possible to be an activist educator, which consisted, in part, of an examination of the professional culture of teaching; they found: "Education is often imagined as an apolitical enterprise" (2009, p. 1). As a result, considerable professional risks are "associated with standing too firmly" upon particular political issues; it is rather, more beneficial to avoid political activism and create boundaries between one's private life and beliefs about social and political issues, and one's work life as an educator (Marshall & Anderson, 2009, p. 1). In fact, the possibility of achieving a promotion or gaining a leadership position within the school often hinges upon the "appearance of neutrality" or the taking of "safe positions" in discussions with parents, students and administrators (Marshall & Anderson, 2009, p. 2). Historically, the teaching profession has been highly regulated; religious, labor, and governmental entities have had strict control and dictated codes of professional conduct for teachers (Marshall & Anderson, 2009). The result is a professional culture that is still quite conservative and governed by "managerial and political controls" (Marshall & Anderson, 2009, p. 5). Many "assumptive" rules of the profession come into play when "educators seek to engage in social change" including perceived mandates for teachers to exhibit loyalty to fellow educators, avoid trouble, keep conflicts private and avoid moral dilemmas (Marshall & Anderson, 2009, p. 6). Further, pressure to make issues of equity "non-events", inculcates in teachers "an evasion strategy" for coping with issues caused by inequity (Marshall & Anderson, 2009, p. 7). All of these features contributing to the dominant professional culture of teaching, paired with lacking theoretical support for

equity in their professional development, hinder many teachers' meaningful engagement with issues of diversity and inequity:

> In their working lives, educators are not exposed to deeply upsetting theories or insights that would take time and distract from daily work; succumbing to calls to redress these ills is seen as distracting, pulling educators from their required tasks. Reforms, professional literatures, training, and staff development offer packages and rhetoric, labeled as diversity training, color blindness, or equal opportunity. These serve to drive issues underground, silencing those who sense that the needs are deeper, and are tightly connected to societal ills… In context of this work, evasion is a consequence of rhetorical strategies designed to convince particular publics (Including educators, perhaps especially educators) that policies are in place while at the same time discouraging activism to address ongoing inequities (Marshall & Anderson, 2009, p. 7).

What are the current reform policies in place that discourage activism amongst teachers and employ a rhetorical strategy that convinces educators and the public that ongoing equities are being addressed?

One of the major trends in school reform on the national level over the past decade has been standards-driven school accountability and "high-stakes testing". Many educators have criticized this movement for having a detrimental effect on schooling by adversely impacting teachers' instructional priorities. Johnson, Oppenheim and Suh (2009) found, that especially for less experienced teachers, "the obstacles of high-stakes testing, curricular mandates, and their own inexperience… can render teaching for justice and equity overwhelming" and, yet, they maintain "as the stranglehold of the No Child

Left Behind Act intensifies and teachers and students are increasingly tied to prescriptive curricula and academic performance standards, the goals of social justice and democracy" are all the more necessary (p. 294). Jonathan Kozol has been a transformative voice in this standards-driven debate in education because of the breadth and accessibility of his articles and books on the inequities of the American school system for urban, minority and low-income youth (1991, 2005). Most recently, his book *The Shame of the Nation* (2005) highlighted the deep segregation within the U.S. public education system and how this broad reform movement in the United States based around standards has done little to alleviate the poor education being provided marginalized students.

On the other hand, some argue that social justice-oriented teaching practices and curriculum deter attention away from getting serious academic work done in the classroom, suggesting that being student-centered, community-oriented or concerned with the relevancy of curriculum competes with meeting academic standards, which in fact, contributes to greater inequality amongst students (Ayers 1992; Kozol 2005). What *is* clear is that with the standards-based pressures of No Child Left Behind (NCLB), many teachers in urban school districts (especially those with students who are struggling to "meet standards" upon which the school will be evaluated) feel that they do not have the instructional time to spend on building skills or addressing issues that are relevant to their students but irrelevant to tests (Gay, 2003). And, yet, educators and educational theorists committed to social justice would argue that "[c]hildhood is not merely basic training for utilitarian adulthood" (Kozol, 2005, p.95). Instead, a balance must exist in public schools between a concern for children's development as people and citizens, and a focus on their development as future laborers. A perceived imbalance with regards to

testing and standards has led some to speak of standards-based or "high-stakes testing" education as utilitarian and mechanical and that the priorities of schooling are eschew, illuminating a "commodificaiton… of the separate pieces of the learning process, [and] of the children themselves" in instructional practices (Kozol, 2005, p. 94). An objection to this standards-based movement in education from many radicals and liberals has resulted in calls to eliminate "packaged" education, particularly text books that are thought to treat students too universally and can do little to respond and capitalize on community assets and knowledge, and to meet students' differing learning styles and needs (Gay, 2003; Kozol, 2005). A standards-based focus in education, can be misguided if it dismisses social justice as not intrinsically tied to public education—its provision, implementation and content—and creates disincentives for teachers to act upon issues of inequity because they are not tied to high stakes tests. However, there is also a way to interpret a drive towards equal standards as central to a social justice mission if it ensures a baseline of educational quality for all youth. In most situations, the skills and content that are evaluated by standardized tests, frequently labeled as "high stakes", are not meaningless and not unreasonable, but represent a baseline for what one would reasonably hope all students could do if the system was fulfilling its obligations. Standards indicate in multiple ways what students will be expected to do in college and perhaps, in their chosen professions.

Unfortunately, policies and culture of public education can enforce beliefs that social justice is something that is optional to classroom spaces and that given the many urgent challenges (e.g. "crisis") facing public schools from low achievement to school violence, there is not time to devote to student-centered, multicultural, relevant or holistic

learning (Gay, 2003; Kozol, 1991, 2005). A crisis-driven environment seemingly demands teachers and administrators rush to meet standards and avert any further school failures, which, in turn, overshadows or undermines the innate value that learning may have in the classroom space (Kozol, 2005). No connection is made between the undermining of the innate value of learning and further school failure. Both Gay (2003) and Stovall (2005) suggest that if crisis is what is truly facing urban, minority and low-income students outside of their school environments, a commitment to social justice mandates a different response from schools than that of a hyper drive to meet high-stakes testing benchmarks. Instead, students should receive an education that is critical so that they may be empowered as part of the solutions to the failures of schooling (Hall, 2006 a); "students, as members of the community, should be educated to recognize the factors internal and external to school that impact their daily lives" in recognition of the fact that while "crisis language may create an initial buzz within academic and political communities […] it is far more intense for community members and students to experience such marginalization first hand" (Stovall, 2005, p. 96). "Crisis" language has been employed by many reformers to justify the misguided attempts to meet standards under NCLB; however, no social conditions in schools (poor standards, violence, drug use, etc.) warrant a withdrawal of interest in what is *just* to make way for what is *functional* (Kozol, 2005; Stovall, 2005). This argument falsely assumes that quality education and educational justice are not complimentary in the classroom. To abandon a commitment to equitable schooling in favor of meeting base standards of learning is accommodating and serving the interests of the existent system. However, to dismiss

learning standards and deem them insignificant is also to serve the status quo of the system.

While multicultural, critical or social justice educators may disagree with the priorities of the "culture of power" (Delpit, 1995) and the structure of our capitalist economy, to deprive certain groups of students from learning the academic skills necessary to meet standards that will enable them to gain access, in no way contributes to social equity. As Lisa Delpit stated: "When I speak, therefore, of the culture of power, I don't speak of how I wish things to be but how they are… to act as if power does not exist is to ensure that the power of the status quo remains the same" and "to imply to children… that it doesn't matter how you talk or write is to ensure their ultimate failure" (1995, p. 39). And so it is a problem that, according to the standards measured by state and national tests, the system is not meeting its obligations to students and communities by providing a quality education. Further, the breakdown in recognition of this point is when it is determined that *students* are not "meeting" or "exceeding" standards instead of reasoning that *schools* and *districts* and, most importantly, *the entire system* is the one that is failing to meet standards. Limited and cynical attitudes regarding the purpose and potential of schooling prevents a critique of current conditions within society and subsequently, restricts public education's ability to promote positive change. High standards for learning and social justice are *entirely compatible*, and the failure to accomplish them both is in the commitment to their implementation, not the impossibility of their realization.

Social Justice Defined

In moving through this review of literature, from political philosophy to the Civil Rights Movement to social justice education, one can identify social justice with a general fairness in society. Fairness, that is tied to the consistent maintenance of various forms of equity—through the structure and practices of society's institutions and, simultaneously, through the embodied beliefs of justice by its people.

Social justice, as analogous with fairness in society, is tied to the achievement of various aspects of equity. The facets of equity that have been explored in these texts revolve around political rights, economic opportunity and well-being, tolerance and acceptance of difference/diversity, and the power to re-interpret history and impact its' making. We see equity clearly tied to political rights in Locke's writing about the government's limitation on dictating the religious and intellectual life of its citizens (and similar texts exploring the liberty of conscience); we also see political rights as paramount to equity in the struggle to establish voting access and rights in the South during the Civil Rights Movement. The issue of economic justice is raised by Marx in many ways, but also by Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr. in their antagonizing of white privilege and its' economic foundations. The importance of tolerance and the celebration of diversity in building a peaceful and inclusive society are related notions that span from Locke to Darling-Hammond (and many other social justice education theorists/activists). The empowerment of the masses or the marginalized to understand how power works in society, to re-interpret themselves and others, and to impact the making of history is a notion central to the civil rights work of Malcolm X, Martin Luther King Jr., and Gandhi but also to educational theorists Paulo Freire, Donaldo Macedo and

Henry Giroux that largely appropriate the work of Marx. What a review of this breadth of literature provides us is perspective on how definitions and incarnations of justice and injustice are both highly personal and reflective of one's unique experience in the world but also collective. Ideas about justice evolve, the strategies for achieving justice shift and meld to the context. Social justice education illuminates how identity and context necessarily play a role in how justice is defined and achieved through schooling. This study concurs that "a broad and contextually contingent definition of social justice curriculum is one that will best support and encourage burgeoning social justice educators" and that "the forms that these curricula take may look vastly different in different classrooms" (Johnson et al. 2009, p. 294). However, there is a significant legacy of struggle for justice both within and outside education that can inform these new educators in envisioning justice in their classroom space and communities, and alleviating injustices in their pedagogy.

III. Research Framework and Methodology

Overview of Study's Design & Literature Review

The researcher's overarching objective in this study is to understand how teachers' lives and values impact their motivation to teach for social justice in their classrooms, and influence their development of curriculum to that end. Consequently, the study particularly explores the moral dimensions of social justice curriculum. It seeks to unpack what values are laden in the curricular texts and its instruction. In the course of interviews, the researcher was explicitly interested in discovering how these values were conceptualized by the teachers in terms of social justice. To what extent were the values embedded in the curriculum translated directly from the personal lives of teachers?

This study focuses on the curriculum of a social justice colloquium developed by two high school educators. The social justice class that is the topic of this study was centered on a documentary project. The documentary that the students would produce from the class was intended to engage students in telling the story of their surrounding community.

The review of literature for the study is divided into four parts. The first section explores social justice education's relevance to public education in the United States, and illuminates the persistent inequities in schooling. The second part of the literature review is intended to provide a better comprehension of what informs our present understanding of justice in Western society and thus influences how social justice in America is theorized and practiced. What broadly-held societal values around justice are mediated by people's personal experiences to formulate their individual perspectives on justice? Toward the end of further understanding the content of that background culture, the

second part of the literature review explores the ideas of Hobbes, Locke, Marx and Rawls in terms of justice. The third part of the literature review is intended to examine collective action in the United States—in the form of a social movement—around values of justice. This study uses the African American Civil Rights Movement as its exemplar of the social and historical context from which varying notions of justice were formulated. Differing ideals about how to achieve equity, equality, or justice were espoused, and critical widespread action toward achieving greater justice was taken at the grassroots and highest levels of government. This third part of the literature review looks at the social and historical moment that was the impetus for the Movement, the values articulated by key persons within the Movement, the objectives of collective action and the methods used in attempts to reach those objectives. Moreover, the African American Civil Rights Movement and various other rights movements in the 1960's and 1970's had a ripple effect, creating waves in the development of school curriculum—in both theory and practice (Apple, 1990; Banks, 1995; Gay 1983; Pagano, 1990). The last part of the literature review is an exploration of education texts that employ notions of justice in their discussion. These texts have implications for the creation of curriculum, the structuring of the school/classroom environments, and the instruction of students in relation to notions of justice.

The findings and analysis of the study are presented through a dual conceptual framework developed out of themes recognized across the literature review paired with dimensions of social justice education identified in literature on the subject.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to further understand the concept of social justice in education and its application in a classroom context by exploring two high school instructors' process in: 1. Developing a personal understanding of social justice, 2. Identifying possibilities for social justice action in their community and classroom; and, 3. Creating a social justice curriculum that speaks to identified needs & makes them actionable in a classroom space with students.

Research Questions

The guiding questions for this study are: How do the educators' personal experiences of (and perspectives on) injustice impact their curricular objectives and choice of classroom materials (i.e. readings, music, and other media)? What are the values that they attribute to social justice that are embedded in their curriculum? To what extent do teachers' personal histories and values impact their classroom instruction and cultivation of student-teacher relationships?

Description of Research Site, Curriculum, and Collection of Archival Data

As was previously mentioned, this study examines the curriculum of a social justice colloquium (semester-long, classroom-based project) developed by two educators at a community public high school in a large, urban city in the Midwest of the United States. The archival data on this social justice curriculum was initially collected in conjunction with two graduate courses at DePaul University (taken simultaneously by the researcher during the Spring of 2008). The social justice curriculum observed by the researcher was taught within a class that students elected to take during the standard school day. The high school (in which the data was collected) is located in a community

undergoing widespread gentrification and dealing with issues of joblessness, drug-trafficking, and "gang-related" crime and violence, which has been referenced in the local and national media (including coverage in citywide television and radio broadcasts as well as national newspapers and media outlets like CNN). These community-related issues were frequently referenced and discussed by the students and teachers during the course of the project. The articulated focus of this high school—its mission, core principles and school-wide program of study—is one of social justice.

This particular colloquium was centered on a documentary project. The documentary that the students produced was intended (by the two teachers) to engage them in telling the story of their surrounding community, and to focus particularly on themes of collective identity and experience. In accordance with the colloquium's curriculum design and instruction, students accomplished this storytelling project through film (footage of the community and interviews with community members), still photography, drawing, and producing an article for publication. The data for this thesis study was collected through observations of the teachers during the colloquium, document analyses of the curricular materials they selected, and teacher interviews about their development of the curriculum. Permission to utilize the archival data for the purpose of this thesis study was obtained from both instructors.

Discussion of Researcher Paradigm and Methodology

The study is approached from a generally interpretivist perspective. However, the researcher has relied heavily upon social justice education literature that would chiefly be considered critical (some texts appropriately labeled Marxist, Neo-Marxist, or radical). Nevertheless, the researcher acknowledges multiple, fragmented, and competing

understandings of social phenomena. Given the orientation of the researcher and the study's objectives, its conclusions are not intended to be interpreted as universal or automatically generalizable.

The archival data was collected with the intention of better understanding the phenomenon of social justice in this educational context through exploring the perceptions and experiences of the instructors engaged in the colloquium project. Through seeking to identify the curriculum's objectives and intended outcomes for students, the researcher was also investigating more broadly how to identify and observe some of the unique qualities of educational programming with a social justice focus. As previously mentioned, the data was collected through three separate methods: classroom observations, document analysis, and semi-structured interviews.

Observations

Observations began in the first week of April 2008 and continued through the first week of June 2008. The colloquium met once a week (8:00 a.m. to 10:26 a.m.) but only during weeks where a full school schedule could be honored. I observed the classroom seven times, which included one session that was largely spent walking the community. During the community walk, students interviewed community members and filmed locations for the documentary's footage. I completed fourteen hours of observation in total, taking field notes when the situation allowed, and completing intermittent researcher reflections.

Document Analysis

I analyzed documents relevant to the course, to situate my knowledge and understanding of the project and its curriculum, and to answer my second research

question. My document analysis included: the *Preamble to The Declaration of Independence* (1776, Sections 1- 2.4); Howard Zinn's Chapter 3: *A People's History of the United States* (1999, pp. 67-69); Malcolm X's speech, *Message to the Grass Roots* (1965, transcript); Malcolm X's speech, *To Mississippi Youth* (1965, transcript); and, Immortal Technique's song, *The Philosophy of Poverty* (2001, lyrics). The citations for these texts (with the exception of the Zinn excerpt, which was a handout during one of the classes observed) were found on the colloquium's webpage in addition to two other texts that were not included in this document analysis: Bourdieu's chapter, "Structure, Habitus, Practices" (1999); and, an excerpt from Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks* entitled "Intellectuals and Hegemony" (1999). The Bourdieu reading was not included because Michael (one of the instructors of the colloquium) revealed, during an interview, that it was eventually cut from the curriculum because of time constraints. The Gramsci piece was used with students the semester prior to the researcher's observation of the colloquium and was referenced by Michael during the same interview. He noted the importance of the concepts of hegemony and organic intellectuals to students' philosophical understanding of the activities of the colloquium. The researcher could not locate the particular Gramsci excerpt referenced on the colloquium webpage (and in the interview); the book cited on the website does not include the noted section on Gramsci. However, a brief explanation of hegemony and its relationship to the concept of organic intellectuals is included in the analysis. The Zinn, Malcolm X, and Immortal Technique pieces were all used as texts in the colloquium as part of its curricular materials. The *Preamble* came up as a historical document of interest in a semi-structured interview that I had with Darren (on May 13, 2008). I read the documents (i.e. lyrics, transcript, texts)

and analyzed the sections that were used in the colloquium or were pertinent to the colloquium's content. I coded each document according to themes outlined in the following section on the theoretical framework of this study. Utilizing the themes identified in the text, I looked for relationships between them and how they informed my understanding of the conceptualization of social justice in context of the course's curriculum. Additionally, I reviewed the colloquium's webpage and the high school's website to gather information about the school's mission and core principles.

Semi-structured Interviews

I conducted semi-structured interviews with two teachers: Michael and Darren (pseudonyms). In order to better understand the teachers that I observed—their intentions, the meaning behind their actions, what they hoped to accomplish—I essentially asked them to tell me their story. "How did you come to work in education?" "What were your own experiences with injustice?" "What inspires you about teaching, about your students?" This study relies heavily upon narratives and affirms deeply the importance of telling stories and seeking stories.[67] Stories can facilitate the development of a greater capacity for empathy and connectedness to others; Hall explains how *social—perspective taking*, which requires "reevaluating deeply internalized subjectivities [ways of seeing] race, class, ethnicity, and gender" (2008, p. 48), is undergone through the exchange of people's narratives.

[67] Story telling as qualitative research "does not try to uncover preexisting truths" or present "the truth of a matter" in an objective fashion (Willis, 2007, p. 295). Rather, storytelling is "a social process that constructs meaning through interaction" (Willis, 2007, p. 295). It is an attempt at getting at the perspective of the participant at that moment in time and can consequently, "generate multiple perspectives, interpretations, and analyses by the researcher and participants" (Willis, 2007, p. 295).

> In our labor to embrace and transform humanity, we must first come to understand the intimate and unbounded nature of it. Unearthing stories of triumph and defeat, of ignorance and awareness, of hate and love help us in understanding our shared human thread. Such stories hold the potential for desegregating minds that operate to keep our world segregated and the marginalized excluded from possessing power. Social perspective taking as a small, but critical piece of social justice, compels us to stare deep into ourselves and acknowledge that we may be both the oppressor and the oppressed, but that change is possible. As we are exposed to the narratives of others, made aware of their life history and the choices that they make, we become more cognizant of how smaller, seemingly inconsequential, personal histories can impact our collective future. It is at this point that we truly discover what equality and equity is, realizing that it looks different from person to person and from community to community (Hall, 2008, p.48).

Telling stories gets at something essential about the connection between human beings. Storytelling is essential to the meaning we generate from our lives lived with one another. The telling of stories is both an effective research method and pedagogical practice (Hall, 2008; Willis, 2004). The significance of storytelling returns us to some of the features of social justice education—that we cannot teach someone or learn from them without knowing them; that difference can be enriching to our common experience, to our society, and should be celebrated; that oppression and discrimination come from a pervasive lack of understanding both the aspects and content of someone else's life.

I modified a three part approach to interviewing outlined in Seidman's (2006) *Interviewing as Qualitative Research*. The in-depth interview approach he details consists of interviewers utilizing primarily open-ended questions in three separate sittings. The first portion of interviewing is aimed at obtaining a life history of the teacher in terms of the phenomenon (social justice education). The objective of the second interview is to obtain "concrete details of participants' present lived experiences in the topic area of study" (p. 18). The final interview is meant to serve as a reflection for the teacher on the meaning of their practices and experiences. I designed the interview guide for the last conversation with the intention of providing Darren and Michael with an opportunity to make sense of the experiences and practices they had shared in relation to topics or themes that emerged through the interviews such as non-violence, complacency, integrity, and hope. While writing the interview guides, I used the school's and colloquium's web-pages to provide context and language for my questions in addition to the Seidman's text.

I deviated from this original three-interview structure with both Michael and Darren, to accommodate their schedules and to work within their availability. I interviewed Michael twice following the outline guide, and I concluded that the necessary synthesis between experiences, current practices, and recurrent themes occurred in these first two interviews. As for Darren, because of his full schedule, I combined all three interview guides (with modification) to cover the three parts described above in one session. Interviews were transcribed and coded by the researcher.

Theoretical Framework: Expansion upon Archival Data

The current theses study expands upon the initial objectives in the collection of the archival data by establishing a theoretical framework for analysis that utilizes political philosophy, the African American Civil Rights Movement, and a greater breadth of educational literature to explore notions of justice. Consequently, the researcher has developed a more extensive understanding of social justice through time and across several contexts. Understanding how justice has been collectively perceived and discussed in the U.S. is important because it is from this context that we nationally and often locally (and communally) engage in a struggle over the purpose of education and its relationship to justice, and how to make that purpose actionable to achieve justice in particular social spaces (e.g. a classroom, a school, a neighborhood). Collective discussions on justice have not evolved uniformly over time but represent disorderly dialogues that start and stop, resume at later dates with different social actors, contradict one another, and leave components of prior discussions behind that are perceptively no longer relevant. Perhaps most important to approaching the subject with the necessary humility and openness, is to keep in mind that the notion of justice is at the center of what links us as human beings to one another and it is rightfully contested and complex. With that said, the study's framework for understanding justice is not without both its limitations and strengths.

The theoretical framework of the study has two layers. The first layer of analysis is the dimensions of social justice education that are highlighted in the literature review: 1. Social justice education is against oppression and discrimination; 2. Social justice education is multicultural; 3. Social justice education is student-centered and community-

centered; 4. Social justice education is critical and liberating; and 5. Social justice education is activism and reform for equity. The second layer of the theoretical framework is the overarching themes around justice that come from a synthesis of the literature.

Why use a dual layered framework for analysis? Both layers serve important purposes in developing a comprehensive understanding of the findings. The first layer acknowledges that social justice education is a vibrant area within education literature with several dimensions that have endured as part of a collective belief about how to strive for greater justice in education. The second layer points to the historicity of notions of justice and the varying themes that discussions of justice have embodied over time. The themes help to connect the identified dimensions of social justice education to other eras in the United States, to other aspects of social life (other than, but related to, education), and to a legacy of philosophical writings on justice.

Six Themes of the Theoretical Framework

Six themes related to justice have been identified in the literature: consciousness, history, voice, action, community and identity. *Consciousness* consists of an awareness of one's connection to history and to other people (e.g. humanity, society, community). It is also a complex understanding of injustice: an understanding of one's complicity in and relationship to oppression, an ability to unpack one's experiences with inequity, and the comprehension of how systems and people function and the meaning behind how they function (Darling-Hammond, 2002; Freire, 2005/1970; Hobbes, 1989/1651; Marx & Engels, 1978, 2003; X, 1965). Consciousness is directly tied to the capacity to act—the ability to impact one's environment—in a reflective manner and toward the achievement

of greater justice (Marri & Walker, 2008). Without a clear understanding of one's conditions, an individual is unable to take direct action to change such conditions.

History, the second theme, is also a necessary component of justice in how it informs one's consciousness. People can use history to understand the present, to determine the difference between reality and representation, and to re-read history to explore the impact of certain social phenomena over time (e.g. white resistance, religious conflict, homophobia) (Bell, 1997; Gay, 2004; Hughes, 2007; Marri & Walker, 2008; Marx & Engels, 1978, 2003; Rawls, 2007; X, 1965; Zinn,1997). History is essential to consciousness, but history is not just about thought—it is also action; the *making* of history; the changing of one's circumstance (King, 1998; Marx & Engels, 1978, 2003; X, 1965).[68]

The third theme, *voice*—meaning the expression of one's perspective, identity and experience—is essential to the struggle for justice (Bell, 1997; Freire, 2005/1970, 2005/1974; Pettis-Renwich, 2002; X, 1965). Voice relates to engagement in significant dialogue around identity, difference, community, history, and power; and the utilization of such dialogue for connecting with others and orchestrating meaningful action. Marginalized voices have been "mostly shut out of the orthodox histories, the major media, the standard textbooks, the controlled culture" (Zinn, 2004, p. 24). Consequently, voice speaks to the significance in disempowered peoples' construction of counter-

[68] Hall succinctly explains the potential of history to further understanding and drive social change: "When studying history, ideally we come to the conclusion that it is not random, nor is it a result of mishaps. History is a decision that we make with our lives, and by gaining a richer understanding of it, we become more aware of how individual choices impact the lives of others. Moreover, history informs us of the deep-seated structural inequities persistent in our society and the ways in which we can continue challenging them based upon past struggles" (2008, p. 43).

narratives that refute "common sense" ideology, which undermines the struggle for equity in society (Zinn, 2004). Counter-storytelling or counter-narratives are constructed out of a synthesis of consciousness, identity and history that is expressed through the voice of those for which that narrative represents truth (Solozano & Yosso, 2002). Counter-narratives seek to dispel majority or dominant knowledge about groups of people, their history, and the content of their lives by revealing a different perspective through the voice of the misrepresented.[69]

Action is a necessary component of justice in that consciousness must lead to expression in verbal, physical and materials ways. To understand, but not to act, is complicity in a system of oppression (Marx & Engels, 1978, 2003; X, 1965; Zinn, 1997). Moreover, to act differently than one espouses or believes—to lack coherence between action and word—is a central criticism levered by those who have struggled for social justice in education and society (Hall, 2006 b; King, 1998; Locke, 1947; McPhail & Frank, 2009; X, 1965). The actions themselves, or the strategies for achieving social justice, are variable and contested (King, 1998; X, 1965). Action necessitates the organization of social actors around a common goal to effect change.

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[69] Solozano and Yosso (2002) explain how counter-storytelling can work to dispel racism: "the ideology of racism creates, maintains, and justifies the use of a "master narrative" in storytelling […] A majoritarian story distorts and silences the experiences of people of color […] We define the counter-story as a method of telling the stories of those people whose experiences are not often told (i.e., those on the margins of society). The counter-story is also a tool for exposing, analyzing, and challenging the majoritarian stories of racial privilege. Counter-stories can shatter complacency, challenge the dominant discourse on race, and further the struggle for racial reform. […] Indeed, within the histories and lives of people of color, there are numerous unheard counter-stories. Storytelling and counter-storytelling these experiences can help strengthen traditions of social, political, and cultural survival and resistance" (pp. 27-32).

The theme of identity is central to social justice because social identities, whether they are based in gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, sexuality or the like, impact one's perception of society and one's experience within social institutions and the public, more broadly; and such identities greatly determine one's representation and socio-political and economic power (Bell, 1997; Bell, 2007; Gay 2003, 2004; Kozol 1991, 2005; Spring 1989, 2004). Identity is discussed in terms of student's variable treatment in schools (Hall, 2006 a, 2006 b; Darling-Hammond, 2002; Kozol 1991, 2005; McLaren, 2007; Spring 1989, 2004). Identity is implicated in how difference divides people, undermining the expansion of community, and justifying maltreatment, abuse, and persecution (King, 1998; Locke, 1947; X, 1965). Finally, identity significantly impacts perception, learning, teaching, the interpretation of history, and the choices that one makes and actions that one takes toward achieving or undermining justice (Marri & Walker, 2008; Marshall & Anderson, 2009).

The quest for social justice emphasizes the struggle to balance unity (i.e. the community, the common good, the public, the poor, the marginalized) with individuality (i.e. the will of the individual, the rights of the individual, the rights of a minority). The theme of *community* is exhibited as: the struggle for unity in the face of common oppression; the obligation of individuals to other people (i.e. fellow proletariats, black people, humanity); and, the necessary sacrifice of individual privilege to be aligned with the common good (King, 1998; Marx & Engels, 1978, 2003; X, 1965). Community relies upon an altruistic disposition of individuals with a commitment to the whole—whether that is society, humanity, or a social identity group—and tolerance for internal difference however that may manifest (King, 1998; Locke, 1947; Marx & Engels, 1978,

2003). Community also necessitates interdependence, agreement, and shared obligations and sacrifice (Ayers, 1992; Hobbes, 1651; Stovall, 2005; X, 1965).

The literature suggests that these last themes, *community* and *identity*, are fundamentally interrelated. The exploration of the relationship between them is specifically important to an analysis of social justice in the United States because the national story is that of a pluralistic society, a group of many peoples, struggling to be "a People" (Barber, 1992 as quoted in Gay, 2003, p. 30). Even as justice and diversity are at the heart of American ethos as a free and open society, a widespread unity—meaning a diverse community built around a common national identity or democratic belief system—proves elusive. The struggle toward a common goal of social justice in a unified society fragments into smaller communities (around social identity markers) that seek internal unity around their common oppression. Thus, the parameters of community in the United States—the boundaries that define who belongs and who is outside a group—are often determined by aspects of identity. This phenomena of social fragmentation is exacerbated by continuing, prevalent discrimination that emphasizes the differences between various groups of people (Gay, 2003). Unfamiliarity in terms of culture, tradition, practices, and language persistently produces anxiety and hostility amongst people that do not understand one another and perceive these markers of difference as a threat to their safety and identity (Gay, 2003). Therefore, the co-creation of a just society necessitates more than coexistence; it requires the creation of genuine communities which "know, relate to, or care deeply about one another" (Gay, 2003, p. 30). The literature affirms building a national or global community around social justice demands the rejection of poverty; the rejection of war, abuse, and torture; the rejection of

discrimination; and the adherence to providing all humanity with a base level of rights and quality of living (King, 1998; Marx & Engels, 1978, 2003; X, 1965).

Limitations of Study

The study is limited to the exploration of one curriculum in one classroom. Therefore, the study speaks directly to this context—that of a particular public high school in an urban environment within a Midwestern city in the United States. Noting that the study is geographically and historically specific is important to understanding the breadth of its conclusions. Despite these limitations, exploring one curriculum can be helpful in understanding what motivates individuals to teach social justice in their classroom. This is made possible through the careful presentation of teachers' beliefs through in-depth interviews and the preservation of voice in the use of direct quotes and member-checking. The study also outlines a process (undergone by two educators) for developing a curriculum toward social justice that other teachers might find useful. Furthermore, the barriers that these two teachers have experienced in applying their values around social justice to their classroom space and out-of-school lives might speak to larger, systemic injustices that prevent greater equity within the U.S. school system and beyond.

The study is fundamentally limited by the methods I used to collect data. Semi-structured interviews afforded me some flexibility in pursuing pieces of information that arose during interviewing, while maintaining some consistency between questions asked of both teachers. More structured interviews would have controlled (to a greater degree) variability in questions and eliminated how that variability might have produced some differing results between teachers. However, structured interviews would not have

allowed for the same depth in responses in some instances and would have greatly limited my ability to probe for clarity or greater comprehension. On the other hand, less structured interviews would have resulted in less consistency between questions, which might have produced interviews of greater uniqueness between the two teachers but not highlighted similarities in their ideas or practices. Without consistency between questions, it would have made it generally more difficult to make even surface comparisons between the two teachers and structure the data analysis. Certain questions were key in gathering the information central to the study's purpose.

Outside of the teacher interviews, the document analysis of curriculum texts was the main source of information about the curriculum. It was limited in its ability to account for the instruction of the curriculum. Analyses of teachers' lesson plans might have granted the researcher further insight. However, the document analysis was extremely useful for understanding the philosophical underpinnings of the curriculum. The document analysis and teacher interviews were supplemented by my observations of the colloquium. These observations enabled me to develop a better understanding of the school, community environment, students, and general dispositions of the teachers. I did not use observations for the purpose of *evaluating* the instruction through the lens of my theoretical framework. While this would have been possible, my research interest was more driven, at the time of the observations, by a desire to understand the relationship between the teachers' past experiences and perceptions of education and justice, and their development of curriculum for a particular context. The observations largely helped to develop my contextual understanding of the school.

Also, significant to acknowledging the limitations of the research, is the realization that the study does not address the infusion of social justice ideas into the instruction and curriculum of a core subject. Core subject classes such as English Language Arts and Algebra have state standards for students' learning that are evaluated by standardized tests. This research is looking at teaching for social justice more generally, and the development of social justice curriculum for a specific classroom context, and not its incorporation into state standards or goals, which are highly variable across the nation and understandably different by content area and grade level. However, many educators have taken on teaching core subjects through the lens of social justice.[70] Despite some differences in developing core subject curriculum in context of social justice, there are aspects of instruction and curriculum development discussed in this study that would undoubtedly apply to the teaching of social justice across many classrooms and subjects.

The aim of the study is an exploration of how social justice has been conceived by two educators through the development and instruction of their curriculum. Therefore, this study reflects the conceptualization of social justice of these two educators through the lens of the researcher. Just as the teachers' ideas about justice are mediated by personal experience, identity, and individual perception so is the researcher's interpretation of them. However, my interpretation has been expanded through extensive

[70] One such educator is Eric "Rico" Gutstein, who has written about teaching social justice through mathematics (2003). Gutstein developed a curriculum with Joyce Sia for analyzing the racially-charged events at Jena High School in Central Louisiana in December 2006 (commonly referred to in media as the "Jena 6") through a mathematics project that examined concepts like probability and randomness. The unpublished curriculum is dated September 2007 and was presented at a Social Justice Curriculum Fair in Chicago, IL.

reading, informed by deep reflection and challenged through the careful observation of this curriculum in practice.

The literature review reflects a Westernized conceptualization of justice in that it draws heavily upon literature from western political philosophy to understand how justice has been conceived over time and to delve into the ideas of major political thinkers whose texts have influenced the United States' national discourse on justice. Reference in this study to texts is for the purpose of establishing a common language and understanding around normative ideas of justice. These texts suggest common themes central to the broader discussion of justice within the United States. However, by no means are Hobbes, Locke, Rawls, and Marx the only individuals who have written significant texts on justice. Also, this study is not an exhaustive examination of their ideas and work. Moreover, western political philosophy is not universal; it does not hold meaning or truth for all people. It, furthermore, does not establish the intellectual inheritance of many societies in the world.[71] It is fair to say the study reflects a Western bias in how justice is conceived. Nevertheless, an exploration of the literature chosen is appropriate given the context of the study and its scope, and given their significance in constituting the intellectual inheritance of the United States—particularly with regards to its development of a democratic system of governance, its legislation regarding individuals' basic rights, and its provision of social services (e.g. education) for the common good.

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[71] See Kieran Egan's *Getting it Wrong from the Beginning: Our Progressivist Inheritance from Herbert Spencer, John Dewey, and Jean Piaget* (2002) for a well-developed argument outlining how western thought is progressivist and ethno-centric, and in being so, racially and ethnically biased in many of its presumptions regarding civilization, education, and human history.

Discrimination exists along many lines within the U.S. Other aspects of identity that contribute to marginalization in our society—such as nationality and immigration status, religion and ethnicity, physical and mental disability, age, and mental and emotional disorders—are not discussed at length in the study, but are acknowledged as deeply important topics of education and justice in society more broadly. The choice to focus most particularly on race and class in the literature review reflects the researchers' acknowledgment of the primary experiences of injustice articulated by the two educators interviewed, which impact their conceptualizing of social justice education. Race and class were the dimensions of identity discussed most during the course of the class and featured most in the texts students read.

IV. Thoughts from the Author

Positionality

This study is generally written in the third person, meaning the researcher rarely refers to herself as "I" in the text. The choice to use the third person is primarily a stylistic decision (not a dismissal of the significance of the researcher's identity). The disposition and positionality of the researcher, his or her "lens" should not constitute the analysis of the data. The theoretical framework one employs in analyzing findings is to help minimize the bias that one brings to the subject and enable a grounded interpretation of the phenomenon. However, I acknowledge that there is no greater variable in the study than the person authoring it and conducting the research. Undoubtedly, my values, interests and perceptions are reflected in its conclusions. I structure the reader's journey through the subject of social justice: from what are my questions and wonderings, to my struggles with understanding the notion of justice, to my interpretation of the data, to my conclusions as to its meaning(s). I, therefore, reject any position that suggests my findings are either objective or universal. They are clearly *my* findings.

Despite the inevitable subjectivity of the researcher, the study's conclusions have significance. I have gone to great pains, as a numerous researchers do, to expand my understanding of the subject with which I write and to also broaden my social identity. Through deeply considering my privilege, reflecting upon my actions, and engaging in difficult discussions with others about the implications of my identity in this work, I hope to have successfully avoided some of the "seen" and "unforeseen dangers" that I otherwise wouldn't have overcome in the development of my research methodology and analysis (Milner, 2007, p. 388). Milner (2007) states

> I do not believe that researchers must come from the racial or cultural community under study to conduct research in, with, and about that community. It seems that researchers instead should be actively engaged, thoughtful, and forthright regarding tensions that can surface when conducting research where issues of race and culture are concerned […] Where cultural knowledge is concerned, what matters in Tillman's (2002) assessment is "whether the researcher has the cultural knowledge to accurately interpret and validate the experiences" (p. 4) of others in a study (p. 388).

I interpret Milner's statements in two ways: 1. I have an obligation to supply you, the reader, with information about myself that allows for you to reasonably discern my cultural knowledge with regard to the subject I am studying, and 2. I should be as transparent as I know how to be regarding the position from which I approach the research and the tensions that I find within that approach, so that you can come to your own conclusions about the relevancy and worth of my work. Thus, while I certainly operate from a particular positionality with noted limitations, I do not discredit that position from which I work.

My Story, My Lens

I am a white, heterosexual woman in her early thirties. I am a native citizen of the United States—a Southern Californian, but currently live in the Midwest. I come from a middle—upper class background. I was educated in mostly private, Catholic institutions from elementary school to graduate school. My upbringing as well as my schooling was privileged; the quality of instruction, buildings, teachers, programs, educational materials

and the like, that I was provided were reflective of the kind of education money or privilege affords.

Retrospectively, I think early experiences might have engendered in me a general curiosity in, rather than a fear of, diversity. Hence, long before I spent time outside the United States, and prior to my forging my own cross-cultural relationships, I had an implicit respect for difference. Variation amongst people has always seemed inviting, wonderful and exciting to me. I don't suggest that during the course of my life I have not also internalized and exhibited white privilege, beliefs in meritocracy, and a way of seeing the world that was for a long time pervasively "color-blind", for which I have had to work hard, and still do, to antagonize and overcome as contradictory to a commitment to social justice. More accurately and with hindsight, I reason that my early exposure to people of varying national, ethnic and racial identities through familial relationships was a possible opening.

My understanding of poverty changed significantly as a result of my time in the Peace Corps in Jamaica. I was in my early twenties. During that experience, I questioned American definitions of poverty and happiness, and their application in other contexts. At the time, poverty seemed to me something certainly material, but also internalized; its injustice was an experience of deprivation that was also mental, intellectual, and emotional. I first served for six months, as a community development and education volunteer in a "shanty" community in Kingston. During that assignment, I spent much of my time walking the pocked and washed-out concrete streets and navigating the narrow passages between yards formed out of pieces of corrugated zinc-metal, scrap wood and cardboard. I tried to organize loitering youth and adults to assist

with various projects and events sponsored by the community-based organization (CBO). I also taught a "life skills" class and tutored in remedial math/reading at the alternative school located within the CBO. Later, I joined an HIV/AIDS outreach and support agency, also located in the capital, where I remained for nearly two years. My colleagues, as well as clients, at the agency were often ailing, and had to deal with immense stigma, insecurity, hardship and violence due to their positive serostatus (being HIV positive) and sexual identity (being gay men). Throughout my service, I was deeply moved by people's struggle merely for a dignified human life. The fight for a life free from scorn, abuse and severe deprivation often consumed them, their resources and energy. Certainly, this simple quest for dignity does not encompass or fulfill my sense of what justice is in totality, but it is the basest component. From that experience, I understand more fully how stigma is socially crippling. The scorn and systematic persecution that follows certain people throughout society because of features of their identity is the worst cruelty I have personally witnessed. My enduring interest in education and social justice both domestically and internationally is toward alleviating the immense intolerance that is existent in many aspects of humanity and creating the kind of access that allows a different quality of participation in social life for those who have been previously marginalized and stigmatized.

Deciphering Stories & Creating Knowledge Consciously

As I unavoidably provide you an incomplete picture of my experience with regards to education and social justice and an incomplete explanation of my conception of social justice, I put the reader in my position as *the receiver of stories*. To get at their central truths, I similarly must decipher the stories of the two teachers I interviewed. In

doing so, I am looking for what they, my storytellers, see as significant about their social justice work and teaching. Here, I hope that the long foray into storytelling demonstrates to you the enormous power the researcher has in the creation of knowledge. In this regard, the researcher is much like a film editor, splicing raw footage of others into sequences that eventually cohere into meaning (or a singular narrative). Undoubtedly, researcher choices are structured by intensive review of data, by proficiency in research methodology, and by deep knowledge of the field. However, all this never accounts for the variability, the ways in which *who* the researcher is impacts, and implicitly structures, what they see, and consequently, how reliant the reader is upon the researcher's individual judgment as to the conclusions of the study.

Researcher Disposition: Commitment to Intellectual Openness & Humility

I endeavored to approach the literature review, collection of data, and its analysis with an empathetic disposition—a way of seeing and interpreting others' ideas that was intellectually open. My principal objective was to understand, rather than critique, individuals' perspectives, philosophies of justice, and strategies or practices for achieving greater justice. In assuming such a disposition, I supposed that the person whose ideas with which I am engaged (whether they be philosopher, academic or teacher) have a different, and presumably deeper, understanding of their context and historical moment than me. Therefore, I assumed individuals genuinely attempted to address the issues before them as they recognized their gravity, and identified viable strategies to address them. To first, understand how people interpret their context and their participation in it and, more generally, to comprehend their experiences of injustice, enabled me as the researcher to gain the appropriate insight to question apparent gaps or contradictions in

their thinking or strategizing. If I were to question their practices predominantly based on my positionality and interpretation of the social-historical context from which I operate, I would be doing their social justice work a great injustice. This study has argued that justice is not a static concept across all spaces and moments in time, and therefore, I should not judge individuals' thinking and practices as if they are trying to meet this universal conception. Instead, I reasoned I must approach the interpretation of their practice based on the social predicaments and questions they identified as needing answered. Rawls cleverly reminds us that the history of political philosophy, and human society more generally, "is not that of a series of answers to the same question, but a series of answers to different questions" (Excerpt from *Some Remarks About My Teaching*, 1993, quoted in Freeman, 2007,p.xiii of Foreward). With what questions were their ideas about justice wrestling? How did they come to those questions? And, how did they come to the identification of those social predicaments? This disposition was my logical starting point for the study.

V. Analysis: Part I: Teachers' Stories: Origins of Identity, Experiences with Education & Early Perceptions of Society

Teachers' stories: Their foundation for social justice education work

Each teacher tells his story of how he became involved in social justice education, including his early educational experiences, the influence of his family and friends, and the general content of his youth. Interview questions probed how these elements influenced his political and moral position and perception of education's purpose.

Michael

Family influence on social justice and education-related activism. Michael reveals the impact of his parents' activism, careers, and sense of social responsibility on his perception of empowerment and justice.

> To be very honest about where it started for me, I can always take it further, and further back […] My dad was a community organizer—I'm the type of kid who grew up where there's pictures of me at my first protest in diapers. When I was in second grade, they wanted to close the elementary school where I went, down. And so I took petitions door to door with my mom as a seven year old, we got an addition built [on the school], instead of it being shutdown. [My] junior year in high school there's a medical waste incinerator that we lived next to for most of my life that we decided was responsible probably for my brother's asthma and lots of other health problems in the community so we organized and got that shutdown. So, I have this sort of life-long set of evidence that change happens on a grassroots level and change happens because of education. Looking back, it's clear to me that this was a path that goes all the way back to the beginning of my

> life. It's very exciting for me to have it be where it is right now. Like when I found out this school was founded after the community hunger strike I knew I had to try and get a job here.[…] I guess that gives you a little bit more background as far as how I got here (Michael, interview 4/23/08).

Michael further shares his admiration for his parents' work. His career appears to be a rather obvious fusion of theirs.

> My dad inspires me. He's still doing community organizing stuff after thirty some years of doing it. My mom inspires me. She's still teaching after teaching for [an] equally long amount of time, and she's a preschool teacher (Michael, interview 4/23/10).

Michael relays the importance of his parents' example and the experiences their activism afforded him, and relates it to choices he has made. The interrelatedness of the justice work that was part of his youth and the work with which he sees himself now engaged, demonstrates to Michael an exciting coherence, which reinforces his commitment to grassroots action through education.

High school: Making additional connections between education and social justice. Michael was presented with early examples of how education, public service, and social justice were interrelated. His high school experiences were also central to his awareness of their correlation. High school marks a period of time in Michael's life where he identifies issues and conceptualizes solutions with peers, and engages in service and social justice work autonomously from his parents.

> I'm going to have to go back a little bit. Junior year in high school, our school decided that they wanted us to do a service learning type of project as a junior

> class. And, I came up with the idea of going back to my elementary school and tutoring. And the whole class was supposed to do it but it ended up just being a handful of us. So I went back to my third grade class, same teacher, and worked with her students a couple of times a week for my whole junior year and much of my senior year also. Then at the same time [senior year], I took a social advocacy class. The topic that we chose for our project was the admissions and recruitment policy for our school. I went to a selective sort of school, run by a university. Basically our accusation was that the admissions and recruitment process were racist. So we did some work pressuring the administration to change some things about the way they did that. […] So that work kinda got me interested in educational equity I would say (Michael, interview 4/23/10).

The service learning project is Michael's first mention of experiences related to teaching. While the influence of his parents is likely not absent from these decisions, Michael challenges a policy of his high school without their direct involvement. Michael, in solidarity with classmates, combats what he perceives as an institutionalized form of racial injustice that leads to his ongoing interest in educational equity.

Path to becoming a teacher. Michael's course to becoming a teacher is tied to race equity, service in the community and in school, and a dedication to hard work. "M" denotes Michael in the following exchange and "R" the researcher.

> M: I started down the path of becoming a teacher my first week in college. I was an engineering major when I got to college. […] I signed up for my first semester for a class called "Race and Ethnicity in Education" […] The first day of class, there was a graduate student who made an announcement that he needed

tutors for a basketball team he coached at [a district] High School. And I volunteered for that. And so my first week at college, I started tutoring the girls basketball team. As time went on I just got more, and more involved in that. My sophomore year I moved to the area. My junior year I moved to the community, right near the school. I started coaching in addition to tutoring. It was very quickly though, that in that first semester of doing the tutoring and being in the class, that I realized I wanted to teach.

R: It seems like it would have been a lot to balance in addition to your collegiate studies and getting your degree.

M: It was quite a bit. I volunteered probably twenty hours a week at the high school. I worked fifteen or twenty hours a week at my work study job. And then, I took about nineteen hours of classes. So I graduated a little early…actually. So I didn't do much else. (Slight chuckle.) (Interview 4/23/10).

Hard work, a significant commitment of time, and self-discipline are themes that reemerge in interviews with Michael. These themes demonstrate the personal sacrifice that is characteristic of his continued efforts in education and with marginalized communities. Tutoring, something he began doing while he was in high school, becomes his entry point to working at a community high school during college.

Emergent themes in Michael's story. While only four excerpts from interviews with Michael have thus been presented, themes related to social justice can already be identified. Michael's recounted experiences speak deeply to a consciousness or awareness of one's connection to community, society and humanity. He is describing the development of an ever more complex understanding of injustice and his relationship to

it, and linking that understanding to the capacity to act. In the development of this consciousness, action and community are complimentary themes. Michael's experiences rest upon a familial example of direct action for justice and personal responsibility for the welfare of the community. Michael demonstrates and actively seeks coherence—an alignment between words or beliefs, and action. His commitment to community can be squarely identified already in his personal sacrifice of time and general commitment to others over selfish pursuits.

Darren

Early educational experiences. Darren recurrently emphasizes a key lesson of his early educational experiences—that school is too frequently about order and compliance, not knowledge. Discovery of this at a young age solidified his distaste for the way that certain knowledge is presented as unequivocally true in school. Darren expresses the anger he felt at having his own knowledge discredited.

> The most poignant experience is, for me, kindergarten through first grade. I got suspended from kindergarten—numerous times. And some were for behavior but others were this whole notion of questioning what a kindergartener should know. And I knew how to read in kindergarten and so once I corrected a teacher on the word Tyrannosaurus Rex. I got kicked out of class. So, for me, I was like "there is something painfully wrong here" in terms of how stuff is going. I got, early on, that school's about order and compliance (Darren, interview 5/13/10).

Darren also identifies teachers that intervened in his education in positive ways and made his learning experiences accessible and meaningful. Darren emphasizes how one

teacher's explicitness, perseverance and authority (i.e. "straight talk") earned his respect, and signified to him a sincere interest in his education.

> [When] I got to fourth grade. I had a teacher—she just came out and said "Look, you know, you've been having problems. Don't get it twisted. I will fight you and I will win." (Laughing.) Every week, that whole piece was like "okay." You know, straight talk—I mean, that was something I really appreciated. Cause I was able to understand it. She had a way of relating to us by saying "Look, this is the stuff you need to know not just because of…" She got us away from just thinking about books. "This is not about this. This is much bigger than this and when you get older, you'll understand that this is much bigger than this. It's not just this thing." (Darren, interview 5/13/08).

Education as critical consciousness. Darren had subsequent experiences that suggested education could be an arena for questioning what knowledge is versus a space of compliance and intellectual obedience. This possibility was broadened by peers and the impact their intellectual pursuits had on Darren's perception of the world.

> Those moments [of seeking out relevant knowledge] kind of reappeared again through high school and through college, by the way of students and teachers and even some administrators. This whole notion around there is a different way of thinking. It's not *new*. But, it's different from order and compliance. School, as this kind of socializing agent becomes different. So how do we get from this order, this notion of order and compliance to really starting to grapple with big questions and dealing with this larger world? You know, we educate ourselves daily—but, then, "What are these systems and forms that operate in a particular

way? That are governing [our] realities?" So, really those moments [were] my way of thinking about [it] And again, as a kindergartner, I couldn't articulate it, but "there's something wrong here, and I don't know what it is but…" Then, folks kind of peaking through and busting up that continuum and saying "Yeah, there is something wrong here. Now, knowing what you know, what do you do?" So that really got me, in terms of introducing, or searching for different ways to think about education—school *writ large*. So that was the piece, the catalyst moments (Darren, interview 5/13/08).

Darren gradually realizes the purpose of education is being able to "grapple with big questions" about your condition, about society, about the world.

Familial influence on education and perspective. Darren expresses that his family has had a multifaceted influence on his perception of schooling and knowledge. His grandmother introduced him to alternative texts on society and history that drove his criticality and spurred his self-directed learning through reading. His father further nurtured his love of reading and independent study, which initially supported his engagement in school, but later served as the platform for his independent access to information outside institutional arenas. "D" denotes Darren and "R" the researcher in the excerpts.

D: So those folks were influential and then lastly, my grandmother. She has all these book shelves in like random places and, you know, I go through her stuff and I'm finding stuff by folks like Herbert Aptheker, Richard Wright. You know these kind of literary folks, very *obscure*, but noted historians. And, just reading those things made me question what was actually happening in the larger world so

looking at things deeper. I think my ability to read really got me through the earlier years of school, and much of high school. Just this whole notion of kind of being self-directed.

R: In the beginning of our conversation you talked about coming into kindergarten, being able to read and feeling somehow empowered to question. Do you see that tied to your grandmother, or your family?

D: Yeah, I mean it was like this big thing for me, my uncle had all these Dr. Seuss books. And they were my older cousins' books so… I don't know when *exactly* they came to my house but I just remember them as in that space right before kindergarten. There was piles of them and also, now they call them basal readers, which just kind of seem like an opening, primary reading book. Those are the two things that I remember—Dr. Seuss books, and these *red* books that, were just pages [with] one sentence and a picture. I just got into this thing about reading them *all the time* and my father would read with me at night. So that was *big* for me in terms of just associating reading, associating that reading—that time with him […] But that [reading] was big in terms of empowerment (Interview 5/13/08).

Darren's family prompted him to reconsider the information he received in school as knowledge. He reminisces about on instance in which he was learning the history of the discovery of the United States, which opened up an opportunity for his father to call attention to Darren's miseducation in school.

D: This whole notion around questioning, you know, asking these larger questions like cause I remember coming home and my father was asking, "Well,

what happened at school today? And I remember saying one time "Yeah, we was learning about Columbus" and "he discovered America." And he looked and he was like "Okay, we need to take a trip." And I was like "Damn, am I in trouble?" You know? And he was like "No, we need to take a trip". And he broke this whole thing down on a map and I was just like, "Okay, there's really something wrong here."

R: How old were you?

D: Five, it was kindergarten. Yeah, I was like "there is something wrong". You know, because the little "1492 Columbus sailed the ocean blue…" And we got our little Fisher-Price record player, and we had to play the record and I was like, "No". So that kind of started my defiance, like "no, this is, this is *not right*". And just being able to point on a [map]. This *ability to read* allowed me to like pick up the names on the map and say "Okay, wait—he was going over here, he was trying to get over here, went over here, called these people the wrong way, whatever." It was like "hold on, there's something, there's something *really* odd here." (Interview 5/13/08).

Darren's early criticality about how knowledge is legitimated through his family and his confidence in his individual ability to see things and voice his opposition grows.

Emergent themes in Darren's story. Thus far, Darren's excerpts exhibit the emergence of three social justice themes: consciousness, history and voice. Through reading and self-directed study, and the influence family and school experiences, Darren expresses an evolving awareness of his connection to other people and to history. His self-directed study includes using history to understand his present conditions. Darren

emphasizes the emergence of his voice as pivotal in expressing his perspective. He alludes to his family's counter-narratives on history that refute common knowledge such as Columbus's discovery of America.

Meaning of Similarities and Differences between Darren's & Michael's Stories

Darren and Michael similarly emphasize the significance of consciousness to seeing one's connection to others, and understanding how they are impacted by power and knowledge. They stress the magnitude of their familial and school experiences in the formation of their perspectives on social justice and in their life trajectory. However, they dissimilarly experience school as a space for critical consciousness—in one person it aggravates autonomous intellect, and in another person it fosters it. Michael describes educational experiences that are largely supportive of his development into a conscious and critical educator. Darren chiefly talks about his experiences in school as antithetical to his self-determination and critical consciousness.

Darren's and Michael's families play important roles in their development, perception of society, power and knowledge, and future work. Michael's experiences of social justice activism and education are interrelated from the beginning due to his parents' activities. His activities are characterized by participation that is in solidarity with others and is independent. Alternatively, Darren's first experiences are characterized by a mostly individual struggle with the structure and content of school. Through the support of his family and peers, education gradually becomes something that is less isolating and more outward looking for him. However, his principally negative experiences in school are the catalyst for his eventual social justice work.

R: From what you're saying, [it sounds like] this need for change and justice really *came* from your educational experience, not vice versa. You didn't recognize a need for change or justice elsewhere and then *use* education, but it more organically tied together.

D: Yeah. It was school first and then doing community work enhanced it. Cause, community work was really this affirmation that "Yeah, there is something. […] So starting to space my kind of consciousness around it—starting in school—but then being enhanced in this broader sense of education through community work. Then, returning back to school (Interview 5/13/10).

Recognizing that there are similarities and differences in Michael's and Darren's experiences is necessary. Acknowledging that they are both deeply committed to social justice education despite coming to it from unique and nuanced angles is also important. While seemingly obvious, it is essential to note that Michael and Darren are not identical. Their experiences and the meaning they make from them in these excerpts illuminate that they have significant identities and histories that influence the manner in which they see and approach their work.

Teacher's Philosophical and Intellectual Influences

Moving from Michael's and Darren's early experiences and the direct impact of their families on their work, this section explores each individual's intellectual and philosophical influences. Michael and Darren further describe the people, who had an influence on how they perceive society, justice, and education, but also the artists, intellectuals, music and texts that inspired or transformed them in some way.

Michael

Books, music, art, activists, and social movements that impacted his thinking. Michael describes a barrage of influences from books to entire movements that have changed his views of education and social justice.

> In [my college] class, we read *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. We read *Savage Inequalities*, which I don't necessarily like anymore but at the time it was powerful for me. Freire has had a big impact in terms of his philosophy, and writing, and approach. The cultural nationalist movements of the late 60's and early 70's have had a big impact on me. The Panthers, the Brown Berets, and most of all the Young Lords. I really have a lot of respect for the Young Lords and what they did in New York. Musically, Dead Pres, Immortal Technique—I started listening to both of those artists around the same time, in [the college] class, in the Fall of 1999. (Michael, interview 4/23/08).

Michael names critical educational theorist Paulo Freire and his work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2005), as a significant influence, which speaks at length about student-centered teaching, and empowerment through critical consciousness and literacy. *Pedagogy* also emphasizes community inclusion in education and education's purpose as the uplift of marginalized individuals. Texts, such as Freire's, on critical pedagogy, critical literacy and liberation education suggest that teachers dedicated to social justice utilize curriculum and instruction to empower students to think critically about their distinctive experiences and position within their families, communities and society. *Savage Inequalities* (1991), another famous education-related book, was penned by reputed and controversial education journalist-turned researcher, Jonathan Kozol. Kozol exposes the rampant inequities between public schools in suburban and rich communities,

and their urban, poorer counterparts. *Savage Inequalities* is used in some teacher education/pre-service preparation programs to acquaint would-be educators with the realities of urban teaching and education. (See Parts I & IV of the Literature Review for more information on Jonathan Kozol and Paulo Freire.) The Black Panthers are mentioned by Michael, who were a Civil Rights era political activist group heavily influenced by the Black Power ideas of Malcolm X and Marcus Garvey, pertaining to self-defense, economic and political self-determination, and a celebration of black identity and its roots in African culture. The Brown Berets and Young Lords were also political activist groups, similarly organized around self-determination for Chicanos and Puerto Ricans, who suffered as a result of their marginalized racial identities in Chicago and New York, and such identities' accompanying experiences of discrimination, poverty, exploitation, and displacement as the object of urban renewal and gentrification (particularly in Chicago). Immortal Technique's song *The Poverty of Philosophy* is included in the colloquium's curriculum. Michael also mentions musical influences and cultural influences from the 1950's to 1970's that were tied to racial justice movements in the United States:

> I come from a very political household so growing up, I mean, my parents listened to protest music from their era…The Beatles and Bob Marley, and my dad introduced me to Gil Scott-Heron when I was in sixth grade because I was listening to [Michael Franti &] Spearhead at the time and that reminded him of Gil Scott (Michael, interview 4/23/08).
>
> The idea of education for liberation has always caught my attention. Probably, one of my favorite civil rights era leaders' push was primarily for literacy as sort

> of a pathway to liberation. The Highlander Folk School was something my dad taught me about and I've learned about it a few times since then and it has always been a inspiration of sorts (Michael 4/23/08).

Michael's sources of inspiration are multicultural, anti-racist, and deeply rooted in the concepts of critical consciousness, liberation education, and community-driven activism. He relies heavily upon a linkage to the past, the Civil Rights Movement, for a deeper understanding of the historical origins of social justice oriented activism and anti-racist pedagogy.

Inspiring people. Michael interest in the artistic, cultural and social influences that captivated his parents' generation during the Civil Rights Movement is very apparent. Not surprisingly, Michael cited earlier his parents, themselves, as major inspirations to him. He also named others.

> R: Who inspires you? Who do you admire?
>
> M: Primarily my students. I see them every day. Their resilience and tenacity and brilliance is always inspiring […] My friends who sort of taught me how to teach, and brought me into teaching—inspired me when I had the opportunity to see them. (Interview 4/23/08)

Michael's recognition of people within educational spaces as reflective of the values and struggle that he wishes to pursue presumably helps him maintain solidarity with them and likely enriches his understanding of what that social justice struggle entails in education. In describing his sources of inspiration, Michael emphasizes the importance of groups and individuals who struggled for the alleviation of race-based discrimination; they emphasized freethinking, personal sacrifice and collective struggle for social change.

Social justice as being against oppression and discrimination, and intimately tied to consciousness, community and identity, is demonstrated in these examples Michael gives.

Darren

Inspirational people—real examples of changing education and community conditions. Darren names educators who have inspired him; they are people that he has encountered at different stages in his life, and in a variety of contexts. These individuals have substantially influenced Darren's perspective on participating in community and educational spaces. In this first excerpt, he speaks of persons who have successfully bridged community work with education by focusing on the relevancy of what they are teaching, being sensitive and conscientious in their pedagogical style, and being community-oriented and engaged.

> It's really interesting folks—in terms of their approach to school and college [that have inspired me]. These folks brought out different ways of doing, and knowing and being on the community side [of things] which I think is as important as being on the school side. There were teachers who did community work. […] A community organizer out of Detroit who really allowed me to understand what community meant and then, what are the responsibilities to community, once you engage in a particular type of work (Darren, interview 5/13/08).

Recall from the literature review (that many educational texts that are concerned with social justice for minority and marginalized youth) value heavily local, community-based knowledge and encourage teachers to develop a curriculum that is relevant to students' identities and families. Darren offers examples of people that exhibited alternative ways

of thinking, or distinctly different philosophies, (e.g. anti-racist, anti-sexist,) in connection to how they did things connected to community.[72]

> A woman named Isla Baylor [pseudonym], who had an anti-racist, anti-sexist approach as a *community health worker* [also inspired me]. So I was like "damn"; I met her when I was eighten and I was like "Whoa, you know, this is a whole another way of thinking" (Darren, interview 5/13/08).

These persons demonstrated that the relationship between the classroom, community and individual could be authentic, supportive and enriching to the practitioner and the student.

> A woman who was actually teach[ing] a tumbling class to preschoolers, named Yvonne Alexander. What Yvonne would do that was so key; she understood—and this is what I thought was so critical to her work—she understood that the relationship to families were just as important as relationships to her students. And *that* made the preschool a very different space. Because it wasn't, her preschoolers didn't just see her as the preschool teacher. They saw her as a family member. So that, the ways in which she could talk, cause everybody would say, "How do you that?" And it was *really* based on a relationship that she had [with students and families]…So they [Yvonne & a student] would go to certain spots and get in particular places just in conversation, but [in] the conversation—they would connect her as not just a person in the school space, or as an adult but, they would connect it as somebody who knows their family, works with their family (Darren, interview 5/13/08).

Within these excerpts, Darren reveals pieces of his own transformation in his thinking as an educator. He witnesses the significance in connecting the educational space to the

[72] All names mentioned in the following excerpts are pseudonyms.

family space, and thereby adopts a position that being community-centered is effectively being student-centered. Darren observes the need to transcend students' distinctions between adults that have an authority in an institutional space, with adults that have respect and admiration from the family or wider community. The resulting relationship, Darren perceives is very different. This development in Darren's consciousness as an educator is crucial in keeping with a key dimension of social justice education as student-centered and community-centered.

Books that impacted his thinking. Darren recalls being introduced to a variety of texts. These texts' significance was not removed from the context in which he received them or the people that introduced him to them. Darren previously mentioned the impact of the books that his grandmother had around her house on random bookshelves stuffed in corners. The next few excerpts are largely an extension of that discussion on the power of books and the sustained consequence of his self-directed study.

> In high school, one of my fellow students, a woman named Casey Johnson, she was really important to me because Casey pushed my thinking around—what school should and can be, and she was *younger* than me. But she gave me this book […] by H. Rap Brown, called *Die Nigger, Die*. I would read that thing *every day*, and used to be like "Man, shit! *This* is what's up." In terms [of] changing our realities and then looking at our realities and how we go and I was like: "Ohh, shit, this is what's up." That was really important (Darren, interview 5/13/08).

Darren also recalls the impact of reading Malcolm X's speeches while in high school. Two of these speeches were included in the colloquium's curriculum. They further enhance his consciousness as to "what is up"—the reality of what is happening in society,

and how it is impacting people of color. Malcolm X particularly deepened Darren's understanding of white supremacy and American imperialism.

> My junior year in high school, […] I remember he [a classmate] gave me this red book. This piece called "Selected Speeches from Malcolm X". And that was the first time that I read Malcolm and I was like "Damn, this *hard*." I mean I was just floored. […] Those two pieces [speeches by Malcolm X] were really influential for me. This whole notion of saying "Well, there's a whole other history around how we understand race". Him talking about the Bandung conference in 1956 and all these people around the world meeting and saying "Hey, we have a problem with white supremacy. There is an *issue* with white supremacy and imperialism and colonialism." And let's not get it twisted; black folks in the United States are experiencing this colonial, imperialist, racist relationship. You know—with themselves to the state. And, what is the *work* of changing that condition? And, then, Malcolm, acknowledging Garvey and saying, "Well, this didn't start with us. You know it's other folks who have done this work" (Darren, interview 5/13/08).

Darren emphasizes the personal significance of Malcolm X's counter-narrative on American racism and imperialism to his own consciousness of the history of American engagement in the world and abuse of people of color in that engagement. This transformed historical understanding changes Darren's perspective on his own conditions within society and relationship to school. He marvels at the legacy of such decolonization and black empowerment protest and scholarship, referencing others like Marcus Garvey. Consciousness, as defined within the second layer of the theoretical

framework of this study, consists of such an awareness of one's connection to history and other people. Also, it relies upon a complex understanding of injustice—both one's complicity in and relationship to oppression, and comprehension of how systems have come to function in society. Darren expressed an appreciation for the accessibility of Malcolm's message in its language and examples, and the impact of that accessibility on black people's reflection on their behavior within the system of U. S. racism:

> Then, [Malcolm] making the conversation practical. Folks can really understand the field Negro and the house Negro, that is—it's stuck in everybody's head because the lesson was so practical, but in the same light, we could associate our *own behaviors* with either group. This whole notion [is] very vivid [in] understanding how these processes work, and what you have to do to change your thinking and ways of doing—so really understanding that process, I think the *content* and the *depth* of his statements [made that possible] without being overly academic to where it's inaccessible because I think that was the key to Malcolm's pieces. Throughout his life, all this stuff was *accessible*. I mean it was very accessible—palatable for folks (Darren, interview 5/13/08).

At the heart of Darren's appreciation of Malcolm and his perception of Malcolm's impact on people is the manner in which Malcolm imparted his lessons. The education that Malcolm offered was accessible and potent because it was meaningful to people's lives. Malcolm used language and examples that were familiar to the communities he was trying to reach. Darren identifies Malcolm as being community-centered in his approach to using knowledge for those communities' empowerment, for their liberation. In turn, Darren uses Malcolm's message 40 years later in his classroom to raise students'

consciousness around the legacy of racism, and to do so in a language and using exemplars that those students will understand and hopefully, find meaningful.

Inspiration and influence of texts is in the translation to life. With regard to the Malcolm X and H. Rap Brown texts, it is not in their reading alone, but rather, in their translation to his own life, that Darren found significance in what they said. Importantly, the messages in these texts, though delivered or written to an audience a few decades before, had meaning to Darren in how they illuminated the framework of American society and the historical and political foundations of its institutions. Thus, it was the alternate view of history and society that they presented that Darren found relevant to making sense of the conditions of his life.

> You know, in terms of seeing my own relationship to law enforcement just understanding that and just being like "This is what he's [Malcolm, H. Rap Brown] talking about," or seeing what's happening to my guys on the block. This whole notion of what's happening to people's families. I mean these pieces [texts] really make it make sense […] those pieces were very influential in terms of how that worked. Then, I was given an alternate view of history (Darren, interview 5/13/08).

Darren's "alternate view of history" was a lens—a different read on what was happening in society. He discovered that, as a nation, as a populace, America has "a short historical memory". Documents such as the *Preamble* to the *Declaration of Independence*, "we keep the breadth of that statement" suppressed in our everyday relations and institutions, yet recite parts of them at the Super Bowl (Darren, interview 5/13/08). The Preamble establishes an official, public discourse, mandating the equality of all men. "We hold

these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" (Preamble, Section 2.1). The interpretation of this statement has the potential to be constructive and inclusive, but as Darren implies, has historically depended upon who is included in the relationship between the two words "all" and "men". The past implementation of rights afforded under the Preamble has resulted in exclusivity. Darren raises the issue of how such rights have not been consistently extended to all persons within the United States, but only some individuals occupying particular identities (e.g. white, male, wealthy, non-immigrant). Darren argues the nation's memory of such discrimination has been virtually erased in the everyday consciousness of its citizens. General omission of the nation's discriminatory past affirms that social justice education need foster a multicultural understanding of national history and be openly and unwaveringly for more equitable reform of institutional practices so that the U.S. populace is working toward an inclusive future that honors the ideals set forth in documents such as the Preamble.

Michael & Darren: Interpretations of the Meaning of these Sources of Influence

Michael's examples highlight, to a greater extent, the importance he places on solidarity, organizing for social change, and collective sacrifice—aspects intimately tied to the theoretical framework's themes of community and action. His influences also illuminate his knowledge of activism in the Civil Rights era and suggest that era's importance in his own intellectualizing around issues of racial justice. His mention of the Highlander Folk School speaks to Michael's understanding of how these cultural influences were impacting models for education and attacking the notion that schooling

need reproduce social stratification in U.S. society. Such exemplars speak to Michael's understanding of social justice education as a disruption in the oppression and discrimination characterizing varying aspects life in the United States.

Darren's discussion of his influences stresses their impact on his understanding of history and society, particularly with regards to race. In terms of thematic aspects of the theoretical framework, Darren's sources of inspiration reveal the emphasis he places on consciousness, but also history, voice and identity. He is passionate about the silenced history of different groups, and generally, people of color. Recall from the literature, critical literacy is a significant dimension of social justice curriculum and in essence, is a refined ability to read one's world and see clearly one's participation in society's construction. Participation can, then, be imbued with a deep consciousness of the possibility of one's actions on the making of history. Darren speaks, in a sense, of his own journey to becoming critically literate and seeing his current conditions through a new lens offered by a deep understanding of his and other people of color's suppressed histories. Within these excerpts, one can locate the experiences that are foundational to Darren's scholarship, which often explores the intersections of education, community-based action, and critical race theory (CRT). Darren's breadth of educators and activists that have been influential exemplars to him speak implicitly to how prioritizing critical consciousness leads to Darren's continual seeking of knowledge and different social justice practices, such as being critical and community-centered in the development of pedagogy . We also see the relationship in this section between Darren's pursuit of consciousness individually (through self-directed study) and collectively through his desire to embody social justice in educational and community-oriented practice.

In each teacher's description of the books, artists, intellectuals, music, social movements, activists, and educators who have impacted him, the opportunity exists to gain a greater understanding of the content that has influenced his perception of the world. That is the content that has impacted his perception of society, his role in the community, his view of morality, his conception of justice and his perspective on what is of collective value. This is an expanse of things to take stock of—even in only two individuals—and the excerpts here provide only an outline.

The complexity and nuance of the interplay between cultural, social and intellectual inheritances, in addition to an array of personal experiences, is the reality of the constitution of each person's perception of what is social justice. The constitution necessarily changes to accommodate new information and new experiences. Moreover, these factors are also essential in the teachers' conceptualizing of the purpose of education. It goes without saying that these factors are also foundational in their roles in working toward that perception of social justice and fulfilling that purpose of education through their practice.

Part II: Teachers' Definitions of Social Justice and Related Philosophies on Power & Education

Teachers' Definitions of Social Justice

This section explores each educator's personal definition of social justice. These definitions are tied to their accompanying views on education and society. Particularly, Darren and Michael delve into systems of power within society, or society's institutions of which education is one. They each respond to direct questions about how they conceptualize social justice and try to embody that definition in their everyday lives.

Michael

Definition of social justice. Michael was asked about his own unique definition of social justice that drove his work and understanding of his role in society.

> I don't know how to sum it up quickly, but I guess that the best way I've heard it summed up quickly that I would agree with is that it has to do with, the way the advantages and disadvantages are distributed in society and equalizing that. The easiest way to sometimes think of it is the opposite of a lot of the way we see our society work. The opposite of domination and oppression—those sorts of things—or fighting against those is I guess fighting for social justice (Michael, 4/23/10).

Michael's definition has a Marxist overtone in its concern for equal distribution; Marx generally spoke about equally distributing the mechanisms of production controlled by the elite class that give them undue advantage (i.e. privilege). The framework's first dimension of social justice education is echoed in the latter part of Michael's definition as Lee Anne Bell describes social justice education's purpose as working directly counter to

"the persistent and the everchanging aspects of oppression" in society (1997, p. 3). Michael's admission that social justice is counter to the way things generally work in society sheds light on the scope of injustice he detects in the United States currently.

Embodying social justice in everyday life. Given his conceptualization of social justice, Michael explained how he tried to embody that in his life. In his explanation, he references living in the community in which he teaches.

> I think what living in the community actually does, along those lines, is it forces me to live with a lot of integrity. It doesn't work to tell students to do as I say, not as I do. That's a bankrupt way of teaching. I live a life that's closer to my values than I otherwise would if I didn't live in the community I think (Michael, 4/23/08).

Michael explains how his students' greater involvement in his life through his living in the community contributes to his integrity and discipline. Such proximity to his students encourages living in coherence with the values that he espouses.

> Last year, I was teaching environmental science for the first time and we spent a lot of time talking about the coal power plant that's right down the street and environmental justice. Local environmental justice issues were the focus of our curriculum and we talked about global warming and air pollution, and my students checked me on the fact that I drove to school every day even though I don't live that far away. And so, over the summer, I rode my bike every day. And they would see that. And before I always thought it was, I don't know, too inconvenient. My time is too important, you know? I had lots of excuses for not

> doing that but the fact that they see me around and they know what I do…I had no choice but to live up to what I was talking about (Michael, interview 4/23/08).

Michael's students reciprocate his investment in them by expecting Michael will uphold the values he expresses to students in class and be accountable for such values in other aspects of his life. The accountability that Michael feels he owes his students is rooted in his identification of students as part of a community to which he has committed to live with in solidarity around values of justice, and to which he has expressed his willingness to sacrifice in favor of their common good.

Modeling commitment to social justice. A key component to Michael's definition of social justice in action is modeling it in his daily life. Additionally, he emphasizes the influence of his students in deepening his commitment to social justice through continued action and involvement in various community-driven, educational, or social awareness activities.

> I think in terms of activism, the political activism that I'm involved in outside of the classroom with Teachers for Social Justice, or if I attend an event with the community environmental justice organization, any of the things that I end up being involved with are largely because I encourage my students to be involved with stuff like that. I think they should be and it's hypocritical for me to encourage them to do that that if I'm not modeling it (Michael, interview 4/23/08).

Michael, like many critical, multicultural and social justice educators, advocates for greater social activism in schools. Recalling the theoretical framework's last dimension, activism in social justice education is "aimed at increasing inclusivity, fairness,

empowerment, and equity" (Marshall & Anderson 2009, p. 12). Students and teachers operate from a critical perspective in the classroom thereby "disrupting" and "reframing" (Marshall & Anderson 2009, p. 20) dominant knowledge through connecting learning to the conditions and actions they take in their everyday lives. The activities in which Michael encourages his students to become involved foster this connection between learning in school and empowerment in the community, and society more broadly.

Relationship between definition and embodiment. Michael demonstrated some hesitancy in defining social justice. Social justice as comprehensive and broad phenomenon proved hard for him to "sum up quickly". His definition partially relies upon how he has heard it commonly defined by other people as an equalizing of advantages and disadvantages. The second part of his definition marks a shift from the first. His conceptualization of social justice moves from a more material or economic definition to a moral and political one in his discussion of social justice as the opposite of domination and oppression. This second piece of Michael's definition of social justice parallels quite directly the first premise of social justice education (identified in the literature review) as being against discrimination and oppression. Interestingly, community, consciousness, or education does not directly get named in his defining of the term social justice. However, Michael's discussion of embodiment has much to do with these themes as it generally revolves around how he lives with integrity in context of his students and the community. Expanding upon the importance of living within the community, Michael states it helps him maintain awareness of his students' struggle:

> I mean it forces me to be in a state of mind where I have more awareness about what my students see and live every day. It builds trust with them [students] in

> the classroom because they see me in the community. It keeps me grounded in a very important way (Michael, interview 4/23/08).

Michael broadly translates his definition of social justice into practice through his service to the community and his students; his service is reliant upon his maintenance of an awareness of their lived conditions and a relationship of trust built upon a common experience of those conditions. Michael's commitment to acting with integrity, staying accountable to students in everyday life, and living within the community might all be interpreted as his individual strategies for achieving social justice.

Darren

Definition of social justice. Darren was similarly asked to offer his own definition of social justice.

> It's [the] ability to critically assess your condition and to work both individually and collectively to change it. So, not just self-elevation, or self-trajectory, in terms of "a better life", but to understand that our condition is part of a larger context. And understanding that means, we work along with moving ourselves but, understand that really moving ourselves also means moving collectively. So, [to] understand that wherever you are, you're not doing this work alone. And that notion of really making these tangible, conscious decisions on being able to analyze our condition and also making these action steps to address it and change (Darren, interview 5/13/08).

Darren's definition of social justice embodies the intersection of the themes of consciousness, community and action. Reviewing the theme of consciousness, it is directly tied to the capacity to act—the ability to impact one's environment—in a

reflective manner and toward the achievement of greater justice (Marri & Walker, 2008). Without a clear understanding of one's conditions, an individual is unable to take direct action to change such conditions. Through gaining consciousness (an assessment of "your condition"), Darren describes how one can take action rooted in trying to secure a "better life" but not just for "self-elevation" but for greater justice so that the benefits secured are collective benefits. Even if such benefits come about through actions taken by individuals in living their everyday lives, Darren believes they can be reflective of a struggle for greater equity. The study's framework argues that action is a necessary component of justice in that consciousness must lead to expression in verbal, physical and materials ways. To understand, but not to act, is complicity in a system of oppression (Marx & Engels, 1978, 2003; X, 1965; Zinn, 1997). Action necessitates the organization of social actors around a common goal to effect change; but, Darren acknowledges that individual action can serve community interests or be in solidarity with others even if executed solely. The key is the consciousness that Darren indentifies that unites the individual with others because that individual understands the impact of his or her own action on the whole.

Embodiment of social justice. Given his definition of social justice as critical assessment of oneself in a larger context, as conscious decision making, and as uplifting others whilst simultaneously working for one's own liberation, Darren explains how he struggles to embody that definition in his everyday life.

> Using my own life and movement as the example, I like always crack jokes with my students like "Look, if I'm telling you all this and we building about this, and you see me out on the street pissy drunk. Right? Fallin' all [over the place],

> fucking up, you know, knocking people out. Then, it's bankrupt." I mean not that we don't have these human interactions, right? But in the same light, I have to be clear about what accountability is. So, in what I write, in how I write it, in how I write it collaboratively with you all—checkin' back to see if it's right. You know so this whole notion of the day to day practices, all these little things that we may consider to be minimal but are crucial I would argue in terms of providing the example (Darren, interview 5/13/08).

The quest for social justice emphasizes the struggle to balance unity with individuality. Returning to the study's framework, the theme of *community* is exhibited as: the struggle for unity in the face of common oppression; the obligation of individuals to other people; and, the necessary sacrifice of individual privilege to be aligned with the common good. Community relies upon an altruistic disposition of individuals with a commitment to the whole. As Darren's passage suggests, community also necessitates interdependence, agreement, and shared obligations and sacrifice. Darren identifies the ways in which individual action can undermine a person's standing in the community—it can damage the person's perceived altruism and commitment to the common good. From this excerpt, Darren reveals how restraint—discipline with regard to one's conduct and in the face of temptation—is a necessary aspect of sacrifice for social justice. Darren labels this restraint "accountability", and it generally means coherence between action and word, between thought and participation.

Relationship between definition and embodiment of social justice. Darren describes embodying social justice in one's actions as modeling behavior in alignment with the values that one espouses. He further articulates it as accountability to others for

one's actions, and as coherence between action and scholarship. Darren's definition of social justice pertains to the critical assessment of one's participation in society, as a platform for making conscious decisions regarding that participation. Darren's definition directly relates to the ability to embody social justice through living a life in alignment with such values. From this relationship between definition and embodiment, Darren explicates two aspects of how he sees social justice: the first is the criticality to develop an acute consciousness of how society works, and then, secondly, the commitment to act in accordance with that knowledge and participating in a just and accountable manner.

Michael & Darren: Correlations between Embodying Social Justice

While Darren's and Michael's definitions of social justice are dissimilar, they are also complimentary. Consciousness of the impact of one's participation in society directly benefits the ability to work toward equally distributing advantages and disadvantages in society, as well as being against oppression. The relationship between these two definitions relies upon the consciousness, that Darren describes, leading to development of a disposition that aligns with the values that Michael describes (equality and liberty). Michael's and Darren's strategies for embodying social justice are similar; they are alignment between values and action, modeling integrity to students, and continuous accountability to community and society.

Relationship to Systems of Power and Perception of Struggle and Sacrifice

Given their definition of social justice and efforts to embody it, how do Darren and Michael view their relationship to systems of power? The teachers describe how they see society's institutions as having shaped their lives and how they currently view

their social justice struggle. Aspects of privilege and sacrifice are highlighted in their explanations.

Darren: Relationship to Systems of Power

Darren describes his relationship to systems of power largely by the process in which he came to see them as inequitable and misguided. He brings up three examples from his life (education, economics and entertainment) to illustrate how they differently privilege people in ways he thinks are illegitimate.

> Okay, you look at systems of oppression, […] at my own personal education, there were these interruptions where I was really kind of grappling with the larger world but most of it was about order and compliance, "playing the game" or doing school. I always thought that was bullshit. Because I would see other folks who would have other experiences and I would know other folks from my communities that were as smart and smarter, you know? Or more adept than me, but they don't have the sort of formal education (Darren, interview 5/13/08).

Darren frequently raises this issue of education as being about order and compliance. Returning to the literature review's discussion of social justice education as against discrimination and oppression, school rules are unfortunately one dimension in which many students are treated unequally and unfairly—contributing to schools' rightful depiction as sorting and ranking systems that are designed to produce a hierarchy of students that too often reflects social hierarchies in society more broadly. When the public school system abuses some students (by encouraging them to drop out, by isolating them from peers, funneling them into special education or alternative schools, and by discouraging their access to higher education), it results in many young people of

color, as Darren states, that are smart but lack formal education and experience decreased political, economic or social power. The research demonstrates that both school disciplinary policies and special education criteria act in tandem to disproportionately stigmatize and classify as "at risk" black boys (Ferguson, 2000; Kunjufu, 2005). Prioritizing adherence to rules (e.g. conformity and obedience) over a school disciplinary policy with the primary purpose of increasing learning, some schools' surveillance-laden, punishment-oriented environments even suggest that administrators and teachers are more committed to readying students of color for prison than for rigorous academic careers (Boyd, 2009; Ferguson, 2000). Darren, as a black male, appears to echo this reality in many of his statements regarding his own educational experiences. Darren has experienced education as, and understands education as, a system of power, as misaligned to being smart and frankly, as just valuing "bullshit". He speaks similarly of the economic system and entertainment industry. He identifies these systems as manipulative and as creating false value systems that marginalize and delude people. "Entertainment—just looking at these popularized images of black folks and then contrasting that with reality" (Darren, interview 5/13/08).

> Look at economics in terms of what poverty really is, understanding what *capitalism* really is in its essence […] You see it now with subprime mortgage prices, you see it with gentrification, you see it with development or what have you, but these changes in terms of my own living, these changes that are happening in [the city]—I mean to neighborhoods and schools simultaneously as *feeding* off of each other is *critical* (Darren, interview 5/13/08).

Darren reveals that his relationship to systems of power has largely been altered by the process of becoming aware of what they do and how they impact people. His dissection of education, entertainment and economics (systems of power) is a verbalization of his own process of consciousness, which is the platform for his continued action against such systems.

Darren: Struggle with Others' Fear & Complacency

In terms of changing systems of power, Darren primarily struggles with others' complacency and fear. He finds it difficult to navigate people's attachment to material things and privilege.

R: How would you characterize what your struggle is *now*?

D: Now I think, being older, dealing with folks' complacency on a number of levels, whether it be my students, whether it be colleagues, what have you. Dealing with complacency and *fear* and that is always, it just kind of *shocks me* sometimes. To see that folks, just knowing when something is fucked up, and "Ahh, well, you know that's just how I go." "No, man, no—this shit is fucked up for real."And we have to be moving in the ways of understanding that. I think now that struggle becomes not only in how we see it and articulate it but, and how do we connect the spaces[…] if we look at this relationship to schools and housing and we look at the massive depopulation of particular communities, and we look at this change, and this kind of school turnaround. Who's excluded from those spaces? […] Then healthcare and how families in school spaces, when they don't have healthcare, have to make all these arrangements that curtail or paralyze

> [them] from being able to engage in school spaces, let alone in community spaces (Interview, 5/13/08).

Darren implies that *his struggle* is in pushing complacent individuals, even his academic colleagues, to see injustice and in getting them to commit to unified action. This action is necessary for changing the social issues (pertaining to housing, schooling, healthcare, and community) that Darren identifies as "fucked up".

> All of this [oppression] rotating around a politic of fear and compliance, folks feel as if the more they "play a game" the better off they'll be in the end. And that's an individual concept because individually, that may be true. In a capitalist economy, you may be better off, you [may be] rewarded for your compliance. The more you shut-up the more you might get *paid*. Right? So that being real, but in the same light this notion around integrity—what's the integrity in that? Knowing that, alright you might get on, but 17 families get *fucked*…Is this integritous to your process (Darren, interview 5/13/08)?

Darren, moreover, struggles with the rampant pursuit of individualized, economic incentives over collective incentives tied to integrity. In this description of his struggles, Darren returns to the theme of community and how solidarity requires accountability to others and integrity. In addition to schools, Darren talks about housing, healthcare and communities as necessarily being against the perpetuation of oppression and discrimination. Darren defines integrity as the opposite of compliance; alternatively, he implies that integrity is the willingness to take action for greater social justice. Darren believes that social justice action is not only beneficial to the whole but to the individual, although Darren openly acknowledges that it is the temptation of direct and instant

benefits—"play the game" and "shut up" to get paid—that motivates persons to act counter to social justice principles.

Darren: Making Sense of His Privilege and Sacrifice

How does Darren make sense of his privilege, challenge the ease of compromise, and resist his own desire for complacency? He states:

> This notion around living this life of privileges is really inherent to false generosity. I mean it just, it does not make *sense*—it is not *real*. It is a *façade*. And that illusory thing becomes another chain to capture you. So, this belief—because now you have developed this way of doing and knowing—that you're *clinging* and *dependent* on and it now starts to rule your existence. So, that type of piece—I'm always thinking about because this line of work you can fall up into that in two seconds (Darren, interview 5/8/08).

Darren credits his resilience against succumbing to the temptations of privilege within academia with recognizing its "façade". The façade is maintained through a belief that the privilege that one enjoys is somehow earned versus the realty that it is the result of one' participation in a system of power. In reality, Darren identifies the system of power as allowing for one person's privilege at the cost of many others' lack of privilege. Hence, Darren identifies privilege's foundation in a "generosity" that is "false" and seeks to entrap people in a cycle of maintaining or attaining privilege versus working for greater equality and justice. Darren's resilience represents a certain level of sacrifice that Darren recognizes. However, he dismisses such sacrifice, identifying it as insignificant in comparison with the alternative, which is the knowledge that you are living without integrity.

> This type of gig [being a college professor]. I mean, you could just *post up* and *chill*. I mean you could just be "hey", get a big *fancy*, crazy-ass car and big ass house. Not this *lavish* kind of living but you wouldn't have to deal with any of this stuff. But the sacrifice in the larger sense is knowing "Yeah, I could do that—but for what?" Because yeah, that's cool, but after a while it's like "For real?" Knowing what I know? I would have to ask myself like "What the fuck am I doing?" In terms all the stuff that I've seen that's happening to folks, in *real* time and it could at any time happen to me. Not taking myself out of that equation.

Darren's consciousness of power and his connectedness to others prevents him from making the choice to "just post up and chill". Instead of enjoying certain aspects of privilege, Darren accepts that his commitment to social justice education requires a dedication to activism. Referring back to the social justice education dimension of *activism and reform for greater equity*, Marshall & Anderson (2009) found that "[e]ducation is often imagined as an apolitical enterprise" (2009, p. 1). As a result, considerable individual effort and professional risk is "associated with standing too firmly" upon particular political or social issues (Marshall & Anderson, 2009, p. 1). As Darren further explains in the next excerpt, the possibility of achieving a promotion or gaining a leadership position within the school or academic department often hinges upon the taking of "safe positions" in discussions with parents, students, colleagues or administrators (Marshall & Anderson, 2009, p. 2). Many "assumptive" rules of the profession come into play when "educators seek to engage in social change", including inordinate pressure to make issues of equity "non-events" and an inculcation of "an

evasion strategy" for coping with issues caused by inequity (Marshall & Anderson, 2009, p. 6- 7). All of these features contribute to the dominant professional culture of education, which hinders, as Darren points out, many teachers' and professors' meaningful engagement with issues of diversity and inequity. Darren explains the sacrifice of credibility and popularity in pursuit of social justice.

> And understanding that a lot of my viewpoints are unpopular. You know, social justice is sexy now, right? But in fifteen years and we still doing the same type of stuff and folks comin' up with all new and, *newly fangled* approaches to thwart or curtail asking people critical questions. This whole notion of understanding that in many circles, especially in education, this is widely unpopular. And it could mean *your job*. It could mean your *credibility*. I mean that you know those things (pause) I've made a conscious decision not to be as concerned about [them]. But in the larger consciousness people would consider those to be sacrifices. I don't even consider them sacrifices (Darren, interview 5/13/08).

Regardless of the possibility of job loss or diminished credibility, Darren suggests that standing up for unpopular ideas is not a sacrifice to him. His perspective on the world leaves no room for him to rationalize complicity with privilege or inaction. "I have no excuse. I can't rationalize that shit no more. I can't rationalize that *to anyone*. In terms of saying, 'Oh, you know, I'm chillin.' That's just not going [to work] for me, it just doesn't work that way" (Darren, interview 5/13/08). Darren plainly illustrates how social justice education necessitates a level of activism and commitment from teachers that is above the norm set by the profession and is beyond the custom of education as confined to the school (or university) space. Social justice educators must have a voice that

engages social and political issues. Social justice educators must be for activism and reform tied to equity. Social justice educators must risk personal gain in many respects to maintain their integrity and live in coherence with their anti-discrimination and anti-oppression views.

Michael: His Struggle against Systems of Power and Perspective on Sacrifice

Michael describes being largely privileged by systems of power and being angered by how they structure injustice for others.

> R: One of the named core beliefs of the high school is struggle. It states: "a struggle against systems of power that have been historically used to deny, regulate and prohibit access to most rights that should be granted freely." Do you see systems of power as having impacted the course of your life and if so, how?
>
> M: Certainly systems of power impact all of our lives. For me, for better or for worse because of who I am, they've primarily privileged me. I mean if you look at it locally or globally, I got more than most and that's still a system of power that has set it up that way. There are other ways to look at it probably but because I consider myself to be in solidarity with people who have been impacted in completely the opposite way […] These systems of power have created pretty much everything: everything that makes me angry, everything that makes me sad, everything that makes me upset and frustrated also (Interview 4/23/08).

The totality of the power of society's institutions baffles and enrages Michael as he sees their impact on marginalized communities. Michael views his personal sacrifice in relation to combating these systems as minimal.

R: The second component of the [school's] core belief of struggle is sacrifice. "We accept the reality that such struggle will require sacrifice from all involved." Do you believe this? And, if so, how do you understand your personal sacrifice in context of the struggle for social justice within this community or more broadly?

M: I think it's absolutely true. I think my personal sacrifice is generally pretty minimal. I mean it depends on how you look at things. I certainly could be making a lot more money. I have a chemistry degree. I could be working for DuPont or whatever. Certainly, I could live in a much more pleasant place I guess you could say—where the reality wasn't as harsh. Certainly I could spend a lot more time doing things that are recreational rather than work (chuckle). But all those things are pretty minimal to me because of how much I get out of those decisions. They're all decisions that I certainly wouldn't make differently but also that I have the luxury of backing out. Not that I ever would, but I know that I can (Interview, 4/23/08).

Michael alludes to the level of privilege inherent in being able *to choose* to sacrifice for change verses being compelled by one's conditions. Michael reveals sacrifice for change is not experienced equally. He also speaks to the access he has to other arenas of privilege that he must forgo in order to maintain his integrity and accomplish his goals.

Some people have to sacrifice more than others. I think when it comes down to it some people have a lot less to lose than others, which is probably why they're willing to make the larger sacrifices. I guess again, all that breaks down unfairly but certainly if things are to change, everybody's going to have to sacrifice. I guess the more you have, the more you probably would have to sacrifice except

> for that the end result of where you end up is still pretty okay. That is sort of how I look at what I do… (Michael, interview 4/23/08).

Michael sees what he does in context of a collective struggle in which everyone has to sacrifice "if things are going to change" and by his estimation, that sacrifice's end result "is still pretty okay". Michael's comprehension of personal sacrifice (as giving up time and relinquishing the opportunity to work for more money) speaks to his definition of social justice as the redistribution of advantages and disadvantages in society. This relationship between privilege and the level of sacrifice experienced in a struggle for social justice is paradoxical. On one hand, those who are privileged can *choose* whether to struggle for equality and justice but they are not compelled and, at least in the interim, do not suffer to the extent that those who experience marginalization do. On the other hand, if greater equality is achieved, it will certainly be those who have been privileged that stand to lose more in the redistribution of advantage, thereby transforming their elective sacrifice to a highly elevated sacrifice. Michael identifies the outcomes, even for those who are privileged, as "still pretty okay" but many who possess privilege and power in the current system might disagree with his analysis. For examples, many parents with children in privileged or wealthy school districts actively resist redistricting that would more equitably distribute funding across schools in a region (Kozol, 2005). Regardless, Michael importantly identifies the inequality of the struggle for social justice and its disproportionate levels of sacrifice depending upon one's conditions and social position.

Finding Significance in Teachers' Perspectives on Power, Privilege and Sacrifice

Why ask teachers about their relationship to power and privilege? Why ask them about how they perceive their struggle or personal sacrifices for social justice? Answering these questions is at the root of understanding their motivation to do the difficult and sacrificial work that they describe doing. These questions search for the reasoning, the rationale, the philosophy behind each of these educators' work. Darren's and Michael's answers reveal the origins of their commitment to social justice and their understanding of what social justice encompasses and necessarily looks like in context of their lives.

Teachers' Philosophies of Education and Perception of its Impact on Social Justice

Michael and Darren describe broadly some of their views on education, its relationship to justice in society, and their role amidst all of it. This section characterizes each of their efforts at making meaning between a handful of their ideas about justice and their ideas about the possibility of education. These ideas are mediated by what they think is achievable through the lens of their experience and in context of their present lives and work. Michael and Darren build upon many of their statements in these excerpts in following sections and appendices describing their classroom practice, design of the colloquium, and participation in the community. The following is a glimpse of their philosophical positions on education.

Michael

Michael perceives his views as generally aligned with other educators trying to bridge school with social justice activism: "A lot of social justice educators talk about one of the *main* purposes of social justice education is for oppressed people to understand their own oppression. To understand, how did I get into this context? Why are my living

conditions this way?" (Michael, interview 5/8/08). Michael exemplifies social justice educators' shared belief in education that is critical and liberating (the third dimension of social justice education in the theoretical framework); teachers, like Michael, who are dedicated to social justice, utilize curriculum and instruction to empower students to think critically about their distinctive experiences and position within their families, communities and society.

Being a teacher, being a "change agent". Michael discusses his contribution to society as being chiefly fulfilled through the academic preparation of his students.

> R: How do you see yourself as an agent or a catalyst for change?
>
> M: One of my friends said something that I think of when I think of this: In all likelihood, the way I look at it at least, is the next Malcolm X, the next Cesar Chavez, the next Ella Baker, whatever sort of revolutionary leader you want to think of, is sitting in front of me in my class, and I don't know who it is. The only contribution then, that I'm making, is that I'm part of their preparation for their life. I think if anyone is going to transform the world, it will be my students. It's just my job to do the best I can to contribute to their preparation. (Interview 4/23/08).

This excerpt reveals that Michael believes sincerely in the immensity of talent within his students and their ability to bring about social and political change. Michael seeks to reflect this belief in his own commitment to their preparation and instruction. He implicitly reveals the high expectations he has for all his students, suggesting that they will decide by virtue of their own participation, who will be the leaders and activists of society. He does not express the right to make that estimation about his individual

students himself. Thus, Michael invests in their preparation equally. This passage reveals Michael's internalization of values central to social justice education, including being student-centered, and against discrimination in the treatment and instruction of students.

Power of education as "catalyst" for change. Michael discusses the meaning of the word catalyst, from a chemistry perspective, and how education can be analogized as a catalyst with regard to its potential for revolutionizing society.

> I'm a chemistry teacher so the word catalyst means something entirely different to me. I think of education as a catalyst for change or for revolution actually. In chemistry, a catalyst lowers the activation energy of a reaction so it's more likely to happen, or it happens with less heat or it happens in a more selective way. And so, when I think of social change or revolution there's obviously going to be a certain amount of upheaval, if not violence, that goes along with that. I think of education as perhaps lowering the amount of upheaval that may have to happen (Michael, interview 4/23/08).

Michael describes education's role in instigating social upheaval, which stems from the desire to change society—"for revolution actually". Michael also points to education's potential for crafting the outcome of upheaval in a way that is more in line with social justice, "perhaps lowering the amount of upheaval that may have to happen" for the achievement of greater equity.

> M: Also, the other piece to it is selectivity, sort of selecting the outcome [of change]. I think education is going to have a big role in selecting the outcome, if we're going to change things dramatically. There's a lot of ways that that could

go wrong. So I think of education as a catalyst for change and revolution rather than myself, because the other part about the concept of a catalyst in chemistry, is it remains unchanged. Or, at least, reappears in its original form at the end of the reaction and certainly, I'm changed every day that I'm here.

R: That was like a good essay (laughs).

M: (Laughs.)

R: (Laughs louder.) I'm never going to think of that word [catalyst] the same way again (Interview 4/23/08).

Education for social justice is deliberately transformative. In the above excerpt, Michael expresses being fundamentally changed by the experience of instructing his students every day. In Michael's description, we see the student-teacher dichotomy is challenged by his acknowledgment of his own transformation (See *Appendix A: Teacher-Student Relationship* for an extended discussion). That the intended outcome of education can be transformation of self and society, as Michael suggests, speaks to two dimensions of social justice education—that is critical and liberating, and that it is for activism and reform for equity. Recall from the literature review that critical literacy's purpose is to make evident the ramifications of action and inaction in the community and on society through the building of students' consciousness of their role. By employing critical literacy, teachers seek to empower students to see and develop solutions to problems of systemic injustice. A key aspect of critical literacy is teachers' modeling (through instruction) how to deconstruct and reconstruct the world. Through the constant classroom exploration of many forms of knowledge and pathways to knowing, *teachers'* understanding of the world, as Michael states, can be altered by exchanges with their

students. The individual and collective (social) transformation, to which Michael speaks, insinuates the potentially liberating capacities of educational spaces, such as schools.

Darren

Within Darren's philosophy of education is a stalwart commitment to addressing issues of identity and justice with students in urban classrooms. He conceives that school should be a space that uses moments of discomfort and difference to drive understanding and tolerance verses silencing people and evading difficult moments.

> I think that if we're talking about urban spaces, if we're talking about black and Latino youth, I think that we have to enter the question around race, class, gender, sexuality. We have to enter those spaces because we have a long history in *dealing* with them and silencing them. So, really grappling with these things, these difficult moments, to move us to a place of understanding. And, not just this flat understanding where we know it […] but, how does this actually inform your practice [as a teacher]? What do you actually do? So in those spaces, these are entry points, that, I would argue we need to be very *clear* about, and start off with that discussion. Then, broaden it out to this larger world (Darren, interview 5/13/08).

Darren posits that the question at the heart of social justice education is: How can teachers' instructional practice increase students' tolerance of diversity in a way that leads to greater understanding of their world and prompts social justice action? Darren recognizes the need for classroom instruction to start with who students are—their identities—and the issues they are grappling with in terms of discrimination and marginalization. This student-centered approach to teaching and learning enables

students to come to a more global understanding (i.e. critical consciousness) of how to deal with the issues that silence them. As Darren suggests, teachers increasingly support students' critical literacy, by asking *themselves* how understanding their students impacts what they "actually do" in their practice (i.e. in the creation of curriculum and in instruction).

This excerpt from Darren highlights a confluence of social justice education as student- and community-centered, as critical and liberating, and as emphasizing the importance of students' identity and voice in learning. Darren's and Michael's excerpts both advocate the adoption of a critical pedagogy, which is a way of teaching that requires educators to intellectually and morally take on issues of justice and oppression in society, and then, embody the extension of those principles in their classroom practice. Recall from the literature, part of teachers' critical reflection on practice is thinking about their own identity in context of the world and how that impacts their teaching, and subsequently, influences their students' identities. Darren contends that the theorizing of practice (through an examination of the "history in dealing with…and silencing" marginalized voices) is especially important to the interruption of the reproduction of social injustices in the classroom space.

Regardless of the racial, ethnic and class identity of the teacher and students, a teacher's commitment to critical pedagogy necessitates his or her reflection upon practice and continual exploration of the values and ideas conveyed in his or her instruction and curriculum. As Michael states, such reflection on classroom practice and the conveyance of knowledge positions teachers as constant learners, and allows for their own transformation through teaching. Recall that Freire argues that "the source of our

capacity to teach" is "our capacity to learn" and that learning should be a creative endeavor, a reciprocal process between student and teacher in the classroom (1998, p. 67).

Power of study. How does Darren maintain a critical consciousness of society and education? Darren stresses the magnitude of self-directed study in struggling against a pervading "politic of fear and compliance". He further describes his efforts to stay focused on a social justice mission through being grounded by the liberating effects of study and critical thought.

> R: How do you keep focused—in that struggle?
>
> D: Yeah, I think about—as soon as you said it—about this quote […] I don't know if [it is] from Malcolm or Marcus Garvey but it's always this notion of "there's no substitute for study". That notion, and then staying on the ground. Right? Because I can sit back here and just write the shit outta somethin' right? And it gets circulated and three people read it. What the fuck right? But this whole notion of really engaging it on the ground…really understanding how this stuff works. Being able to talk to folks about it. And then addressing it—two things come out in this—your life example but then really being able to talk out the particulars of a space, and seeing what avenues are there to address those situations. (Interview, 5/13/08).

One outcome of self-directed study that Darren identifies is a "life example" that is aligned to social justice. This outcome is tied to the concepts of accountability and integrity that Darren frequently mentions as central to his social justice struggle. The other outcome is the ability to engage with others to strategize around how to address

common problems or situations that arise. This ability to engage is due to the critical literacy Darren developed from such study, and the resulting consciousness it has given him as a foundation for activism and interaction.

The Privilege of education. Darren speaks about the privilege of education—of serving in an educational space and possessing a position of authority when it comes to research (i.e. the production of knowledge). His statements revolve around how to use the privilege inherent in his position as a professor (freedom, economic well-being), and the privilege (resources) embedded in academia more generally, for the good of the community and for continued participation in the community.

> This whole notion around using this space because the thing about academic gigs is you have this kind of freedom of schedule so the thing is how do you make that work to address the stuff that you do. You know so, this kind of process, you do it—you are able to eat. But in the same light, on the same level—how do you make that stuff work? And engage it from a space that allows you to not only interact…But to participate in the work [in the community]. How to [participate] in changing these conditions because, and then, understanding it as your own, and I think that's a big thing because it's not this kind of neutral research agenda—I mean that's always been bullshit. Because I know at any given moment, the conditions of my students could be my own—at *any* given moment. I mean, where I come from, from where I still live, to who I interact with, at any given moment that I could be in the same situation. Understanding that and that being a point of solidarity to operate from as opposed to "Look at me, I'm doin' really good!" (Darren, interview 5/13/08).

Darren reveals his need to maintain identification with people and communities, who are marginalized within society. Darren's continued identification with marginalized persons and maintenance of a critical consciousness creates the necessary foundation for his activism for greater equity (the last dimension of social justice education). He is grounded in the notion that "at any given moment that I could be in the same situation". This notion is a lens through which he measures what he and others in academia are "actually doing to address what's happening", and further, as a lens through which to give some perspective as to the real importance of a higher education degree in building "expertise".

> No, no—I mean, I'm doing some things, but let's look at our larger process and what we're *actually doing* to address what's happening. Now, the academic position being irrelevant to those spaces. I mean the only thing that the degree says is that I did was write a long paper. I mean, in terms of the larger sense. And I might have a particular set of expertise around particular issues but I make a larger argument that the expertise is actually developed in that daily work that you do. That daily process that you engage in and then the *reflection* allows you to *improve* on those spaces. That reflection and interaction, those pieces are, are critical in terms of sort of you know, formulating a process. (Darren, interview 5/13/08).

Putting his academic position in perspective, Darren contends that his expertise comes from doing (i.e. interaction) in the community and reflection upon his actions. He falls short, however, of acknowledging how his degree or his position in education might give him the access, by way of authority, to do the community work he describes. Darren

expresses a sincere desire to refute the automatic legitimacy given to being a professor; however, he might be dependent on its privilege to execute his work and, arguably, he utilizes experiences or knowledge he has gained within academia (beyond writing a long paper) in his social justice work too. On the other hand, he is genuine in his belief that the expertise he gains in the community is well beyond the value of the expertise he has gained within the institution. This truth affords an important glimpse into Darren's own philosophy about the origins of valuable or legitimate knowledge—presumably the knowledge that establishes his consciousness of social justice and his work in education and society.

Contextual Understanding of Darren's and Michael's Philosophizing on Education

Darren stresses that the point of social justice education is addressing issues of diversity, identity and injustice in the classroom so that students are led to a different type of interaction in society. Michael emphasizes that social justice education is helping students to understand their own oppression and the conditions of their lives. Michael explores his beliefs in the transformative properties of education and philosophizes about the significance of his role as a teacher within the community high school. Alternatively, Darren discusses the challenges of not being led astray from a social justice agenda and disposition, while taking advantage of the potential academia holds for assisting marginalized communities.

The differing content of each teacher's philosophizing on education speaks to the principal differences in their primary educational contexts. Outside of instructing the colloquium, Darren is a full-time, tenured professor at a public university and Michael is a full-time chemistry teacher at the high school in which the colloquium project is based.

However, both educators fervently express a desire to use their position to elevate their students and the communities with which they work. Michael and Darren advocate for the adoption of a way of teaching and learning that is critical, and aligned with two concepts central to social justice education: critical literacy and critical pedagogy. Within the excerpts here, Darren focuses mainly on maintaining a commitment to being community-centered in his work against discrimination, and sustaining activism tied to equity. Darren also speaks to being student-centered in the classroom, prioritizing student identities and voices. Michael speaks chiefly to being student-centered and critical in his approach to classroom pedagogy and dedicating himself to educational practice that is liberating.

Part III: The History of the School & Community

Colloquium Context: History of the School & Community

Darren and Michael outline the process by which the high school came to be established, and the origins of its social justice mission. They describe their personal involvement in the founding and opening of the school. The qualities of the community, in which the school exists, are explored and each educator expresses more deeply his past and present relationship to the community and school.

Darren's perspective: history and establishment of the school

Darren describes the creation of the school as a protracted and inclusive process, comprising of demonstrations, camping out in tents on vacant land, and a hunger strike, that brought many stakeholders together. In doing so, he illuminates how the school was and is a contested space. Within the school community, there is still debate around what social justice means and how to go about doing it with others.

> Yeah, I mean it's [the high school] a contested space. The question that we always have to ask is: "How do you actually engage in social justice?" Changing our human condition in a system that doesn't necessarily support that. So you've always got to deal with [the] order and compliance of [the school district]. Then, engaging folks on different fronts, beginning with them. So, it's constantly a contested space, it's constantly negotiated (Darren, interview 5/13/08).

According to Darren, the constant negotiation around what social justice struggle encompasses is a key part of preserving the struggle itself. Founding the school was a "community driven process". The development of school curriculum and the school's

ongoing administration must, therefore, maintain the spirit of the extraordinary measures taken by the community in the school's creation.

> One of the pieces for those that were there, in the beginning [of fighting for and creating the school]—some even date back to the hunger strike—[was] really being *true* to this notion of a community commitment. This whole notion of "How do you maintain this community-driven process?" That created the school, but now is governed by a completely different entity with all these rules, orders and compliances that you have to show some type of, I guess compliance *with*. That you have to demonstrate some kind of compliance with. So, this becomes the heavy issue. In terms of, how do our subjects reflect that? How does our instruction reflect that? How does our *own consciousness* reflect that? Those pieces are always the questions that we deal with. It is *not* a panacea, but that's the nature of struggle. I mean, that we're willing to understand that (Darren, interview 5/13/08).

An aspect of sustaining "a community commitment "within the school, according to Darren, is not fully submitting to an outside system of "rules, orders, and compliances" but understanding that it is a struggle to continuously challenge such a system—and that struggle is multidimensional. Maintaining a criticality about society and a vision of social justice that is aligned with the community's best interest is central to the school's commitment to the community. Retaining that criticality and vision is ensuring its reflection in subjects that the school offers and in the instruction that happens in classes. Essentially, the questions that such instruction and subjects enable students and teachers to ask about society are the aspects of consciousness that Darren infers as linked to the

community's welfare. Darren reveals that collective self-determination was a prominent piece of the school's initiation.

> One of the main organizers of the hunger strike polled *thousands* of people in the community. He just asked this one question: "In your dream of dreams, what would a school look like?" I'm like "damn"—having *that* as your process. I mean, one of the things that they did, they had these pictures. They gave everybody disposable cameras and took them to schools, around the city, around the country actually and just kind of took pictures, and was like yeah, "Okay, this is what we want. This is what we want." So, having this kind of ground or baseline from which to operate. That becomes important--in terms of how to really engage this process. You know, in terms of what this place [the school] should be… and then, *how* it should operate. So it's a very, very, very, very, very unique situation. Not one that hasn't happened before but there's heavy community accountability—in that process (Darren, interview 5/13/08).

The schools uniqueness cannot be unmarried from the communal vision that founded it but also the collective sacrifice and organizing that was necessary in securing the resources to create such an educational space for the community. Recall that Bell stated social justice education is both "process" and "goal", which is very evidently reflected in Darren's description of the school's origins. Both the process—the way in which the school is struggled for—and the goal—the outcome of what the school is and stands for—reflects dimensions of social justice education. Two apparent aspects of the early stages of the process that support its characterization as socially-just are that it is community-centered and encompasses activism for equity. Darren describes further the

grassroots activism (i.e. community hunger strike, marches, street theatre) behind the school's institution.

> R: Can you talk a little bit more about your participation in the creation of the school?
>
> D: Well, actually, I knew two of the hunger strikers. I went to school with one of them. I knew another one through some community work. She had talked about stuff that had been happening in the neighborhood. She told me, in a workshop that she was running, that they were planning a big event. And so I come and I see all these people coming down the street and they're marching down the street. They come and they're doing community theatre. They got tents set up and they got water. And I'm like "Damn, alright, so this is just really on, and crackin'". And people were like emailing me from Korea. It was like "Man, dude, I heard you all got it, it's just really going down." And I'm saying, "Yeah." And then, finally, being able to switch who was important, in the process of the hunger strike. In 19 days, the CEO of the school district left and a new one comes in. [He] tries to get off the publicity and says "Alright, you all can have the school. We're going to get you all the school". So that piece comes (Darren, interview 5/13/08).

What is unique about the establishment of this community, public high school? Generally, the inclusiveness of the process is striking. The level of community involvement in creating the vision of the school (deciding what it should look like, encompass, and do for its students based on national and regional models), in organizing to get the school (marches, design-oriented school trips, etc.), and also in sacrificing to

obtain the school (hunger strikes, camp outs in tents, etc.) suggests an extraordinary amount of commitment and an uncommon unity in action. Moreover, the people charged with the implementation of the school retain that commitment to the community in honor of their social justice work in founding the school. People within the school also maintain a perspective that solidarity should not be undermined by debate and contestation around the meaning of social justice or the strategies for securing greater justice. Therefore, the context of the school (from its history, to its surrounding community, to its faculty) is infused with important dimensions of social justice education: it is critical and liberating, it is community-centered, and it is activism and reform for greater equity. The process of community involvement in establishing the school around securing greater justice for marginalized students while maintaining a dedication to contestation *and* solidarity speaks to the essential relationship between these aspects.

Darren's Involvement: Making a Commitment to the Community & High School

The story of the school reflects a collective commitment to action against oppression, which is further confirmed in Darren's subsequent descriptions of the community and school founders. He speaks of his involvement in developing the school's curriculum, which he describes as devising a process of "doing and knowing".

> Then, about a year and a half later, they [organizers for the school] pull me into—a group, three folks actually—pull me into a room, just brought me into a house, just called me up and was like, "Look man, we're doin' this work, what is this thing around curriculum?" And it was interesting because my explanation to them was just that curriculum is a process, a way of doing and knowing—a

> particular thing. And they said "Okay, cool." So as that transpired, .they started to do the planning. They had a project coordinator. And then, I was brought back in to a meeting and some of the folks approached me about "Okay, now after our earlier conversations, how do you feel about being on a design team?" And I said "cool". And they brought in me with another colleague (Darren, interview 5/13/08).

Darren demystifies the creation of school curriculum and explains it in a way that suggests curriculum can also be created by people who aren't teachers or academics. He unpacks its purpose as a process of understanding a particular thing. Hence, curriculum begs the question: What should students know? What should they understand? Therefore, Darren empowers community members to do their own planning and infuse in the school's curriculum their hopes for what the school will be and achieve. Such empowerment of community stakeholders, such as parents, in the design of the education that students will receive demonstrates the dimensions of social justice education that are community-centered and liberating. Darren makes a further commitment to the school after joining its design team.

> So, as the design team process moved forward, I was saying to myself, "Okay, one of the things I need to do here is be clear about the design—[both] the design team process and then the commitment post-design." So this whole notion of continuity—not just to build it, "Hey, it's nice". But, to be in a process of creation and [in] maintaining with the mission [of social justice]. So, that thing for me was "Okay, cool... let me promise to the design team, that was part of the

> process, I will teach at this space". So, being committed to this particular space, in a particular way (Darren, interview 5/13/08).

Darren infers in the above excerpt that a necessary part of his commitment to the school in terms of social justice was the continuity between his participation in designing the school and then working to implement that design. Darren does not fully reveal his reasoning behind this assertion, but one possibility points to the beliefs he expressed earlier around accountability and also coherence between words, beliefs and action. Darren may have felt that if he was going to advise the community as to *how to do* something, he should be involved in its *doing*. This possibility seems further confirmed in his description of how his relationship to the school shifted from meeting with community members to teaching in the school space. In the following excerpt, Darren is discussing his current relationship with the community surround the school.

> It's different because now it's more based in the school. Where the initial piece was the folks that were organizing the design teams were community folks and they were like "Okay, you all have this particular expertise; this is what we want in the space. Now your responsibility is to get us this thing, in this space. But in order to do that, you have to constantly be in contact with us about that space." So a lot of those folks aren't as involved [in the school now]—some are still around. But, now my shift has gone to the school space. In terms of looking at the school and [then] extending out, hence the colloquium project, and that's kind of how my space has shifted (Darren, interview 5/13/08).

Darren mentions the colloquium project as an effort now to look out to the community beyond the school walls—a reconnection of sorts to the community. With some of the

original community members less present in the school's daily operations, Darren's own efforts have shifted from a school curricula designer to an educator that is accountable for translating those original hopes of the community into the work he does with students in the colloquium. During his explanation of the school's creation and design, I found it quite exceptional—the level of community organization, sacrifice, and political engagement required in getting the school founded and built.

> R: And the people that brought you on [to the design team for the school]—they were community members? The people who kept you in it?
>
> D: Uh-hmm.
>
> R: They sound like they were well-organized.
>
> D: Very.
>
> R: Do you any sense of how that happened? Where that comes from? That sort of organization?
>
> D: That particular community, is a very—is a highly contested space. One that comes from independent political organizing, which has a very, very different history. And independent political organizing has a different take—it's not a top down process. Its representative spaces that really feed on the pulse of the people. You know, not to sound cliché but [these spaces are committed] to what folks are thinking (Interview 5/13/08).

Darren's description of the community as a context from which the school was created is important. The school would not have existed at all, let alone with the same purpose and values around consciousness, self-determination, struggle and sacrifice, if it had not been for the very intentional, organized efforts of community members. The school's mission

is, at least in its spirit if not application, aligned to the political aspirations of the community, which is straightforwardly characterized as socially-economically and racially isolated.

The entire process outlined by Darren—the school's establishment, curriculum design and current activities—squarely demonstrates all five dimensions of social justice education. The school begins with an exceptionally united struggle against discrimination pertaining to the quality and accessibility of public education for the community's youth (1. Social justice education is against oppression and discrimination). The school is finally established through a community-driven process that encompasses heavy activism and organization (5. Social justice education is activism and reform for equity). The curriculum design process is community-centered, and focused on sustaining the self-determination of the community through an organic process of determining what students should know and what knowledge is important for social transformation (3. Social justice education is student-centered and community-centered; 4. Social justice education is critical and liberating). Hence, the school's curriculum and continued efforts reflect the unique identities of its urban, black and Latino students, and are aligned to the collective histories of their families and communities (2. Social justice education is multicultural).

Michael's Involvement: Teaching at the High School & Living in the Community

Michael describes coming back to the city, and connecting with Darren as a result of having mutual friends. Michael's colleagues from college (who were working with him where he coached girls' basketball and tutored) knew Darren and of his social justice education work.

> I asked, "Who I should get in touch with [here]?" and who was doing the type of work that we were doing. And they gave me Darren's name. And so when I got back to the city, I made sure to get in touch with Darren. And he's the one who informed me about this school and got me involved with a lot of the stuff I do now. This school didn't exist then. So, when I first got in touch with Darren was in '03. I taught at another high school for a semester only […] Then I taught at another high school for three years […] then [I] got hired the Spring of 2006 here, two years ago. I started teaching here that summer. That was the first year of the school, being actually open (Michael, interview 4/23/08).

Michael describes a more abbreviated and generally different process of coming into the school than Darren. He is hired as a full-time teacher and then, develops his relationship with the community in context of that role, which continues to be his principal connection to community members. In keeping his commitment to social justice education practice, Michael immediately looks to the community as a primary source of knowledge in building his curriculum.

> My relationship with the community is primarily through the school, although, my first year here instead of the colloquium that I'm teaching this year, I taught "community organizing colloquium" with a community organizer with the Community Development Corporation. So through that experience, I know several of the community organizers. I've also worked with the community environmental justice organization. As soon as I got hired, I actually went to them to learn about what they do, to develop my environmental science curriculum (Michael, interview 4/23/08).

Michael seeks out information from community resources (organizations) for his curriculum content and relies upon community organizers and experts for knowledge about issues pertinent to students. Although Michael sees himself and his participation in the community in context of his role as a teacher, his definition of what that role entails is clearly expanded from its mainstream conceptualization and is connected to other aspects of community life such as organizing and environmental welfare.

> My dad's a community organizer, and I never thought that would be something I would be involved in. I thought that teaching was my way to contribute but the longer I teach the more I realize how similar the two jobs are (Michael, interview 4/23/08).

Transitioning between teaching and community organizing has necessitated Michael being able to navigate being "an outsider". Through living in the community and his social justice and education work, Michael has developed trusting relationships with students and community members that facilitate his involvement in issues of importance to their welfare and self-determination.

> R: Would you say that your relationship has evolved, with the area, over time?
>
> M: Yeah, I mean (pause) it can't be instantaneous. I'm clearly an outsider. It takes time to build trust. So I've been very intentional about doing that I think, like I wanted to live in one of the communities [around my school]. One of the things my first three and a half years here, that I really missed about [the old community in which I used to work], was the sense of community that I had at the high school, living right by the school. And, you know like the mother of one of

> my students drove the bus that I took to class at the university. And just seeing people at the grocery store and everywhere, that know that you're there for good reasons. That's, one of the best feelings that I think I've experienced in my life, so I wanted that […] Part of my reason for coming here was that I wanted to be at a neighborhood school and live in the neighborhood. Being connected with community organizers is probably as quick a way as any to get to know people cause they know a lot of people—that's their job, is to know people. That's been helpful (Interview 4/23/08).

Michael reveals how being in the community is fulfilling to him as an educator. He gets affirmation from living among people who believe he is there "for good reasons"; his role as a teacher does much to legitimize his relationship to the community. From this excerpt, Michael unveils a duality in his purpose for being involved with community organizers; it enables him to know people quickly, while facilitating his rapid understanding of what issues are of importance to his students. So the same strategies around community involvement and being student-centered that make Michael's practice aligned to social justice education are also what he identifies as gratifying and enhancing his effectiveness as an educator.

Much of what Michael describes in terms of his process and philosophy behind developing curriculum is reinforced as socially-just educational practice in the literature review (Revisit sections *Social justice education is multicultural*, and *Social justice education is student-centered and community-centered*). For example, Pettis-Renwick (2002) describes how the inclusion of a diversity of people's experiences and histories in curricular texts and materials is crucial to cultivating empowerment amongst students and

fostering the development of their own criticality and voice. She finds that this can be especially true for students who come from marginalized communities that have potentially internalized popular ideas that infer the insignificance of their communities' struggles. Michael seeks out the organizations and individuals that are at the heart of the addressing community challenges; he does so to identify what community members and activists can offer in building students' criticality and developing students' voices. Critical educators believe knowledge should be seen as coming from multiple places including marginalized communities. Alternatively, when curriculum is foreign, lacks relevance, or is bereft of meaning to students, education has diminished potential to transform the conditions of their lives and their communities. Michael describes a process of teaching and curriculum creation that combats these educational issues by being embedded in the community. When asked if there are any negative aspects of being intimately tied to the community and living within the community, Michael states:

> I wouldn't want it any other way, I think the only thing I ever have hesitations about in terms of living in the community is it is a neighborhood that's undergoing gentrification and I don't want to be part of that. I worry about that, I mean whenever I think through it deeply I don't think I am. I rent, you know? I'm here to work in the community; I'm not here to make any money and profits, but it has an impact. When people see me outside with my dog, like say they're looking for a property or something…Like that's going to change their perception of the neighborhood., compared to if they didn't see me. Right? And so I worry about contributing in that small way—now, like one of the things people always tell me is gentrification is caused by these huge planning efforts and market forces

> and real estate companies and that that contribution is pretty minimal. But that's my only concern about it…In terms of drawbacks to living in the community, I don't think there are any (Michael, interview 4/23/08).

Michael divulges that part of his navigation of his identity as an outsider of the community, in terms of social justice, has been dealing with his own feelings about how his racial identity relates to widespread changes in the community that he associates with injustice, like gentrification. Michael does not explicitly bring up race here, and he does not directly identify himself with a racial category at any time during the interview, but his conceptualization of social justice would seem to have much to do with racial justice in its strong roots in the Civil Rights Movement, and in the sources he names in his description of what has influenced his ideas. Michael appears to me, the researcher, as white so I assume that he is discussing how other white people might perceive the neighborhood as "changing" by virtue of seeing him, another white person, in the neighborhood, which is predominantly black.

This last excerpt demonstrates the depth of Michael's consciousness of race and the economic and social issues impacting his community (e.g. gentrification). The theoretical framework's theme of consciousness speaks to a complex understanding of injustice, including an understanding of one's complicity in and relationship to oppression, and the comprehension of how systems function and the meaning behind how they function. As Michael suggests in his thoughts and struggle over his role in gentrification, consciousness is directly tied to the capacity to act in a reflective manner and toward the achievement of greater justice in one's community. In the above excerpts,

Michael necessarily navigates the relationship (and tensions) between key themes related to justice, including consciousness and action, and identity and community.

The School, the Community, the Educators: Background and Context of Colloquium

The reasons for exploring in such depth the background of the school, the community, and the teachers' relationship to and history with both, are for the development of a better understanding of the context in which the colloquium project takes place. Several instances in this study have spoke to the importance of context in the development and purpose of education, and also to the conceptualization of social justice. Through Darren's recounting of the school's history, the reader learns that it was founded as a result of an immense amount of community organizing and collective struggle. The strategies employed by the community are those of nonviolent protest that were largely developed and piloted in the United States during the African American Civil Rights Movement. In that way, the school's existence and mission is closely aligned with social justice, and due to the community's involvement and sacrifice in its establishment, the school continues to have a significant amount of accountability to the community. The educators' descriptions of their involvement in the school and community further explore the difference in their experiences and perspectives despite their similar dedication to co-teaching the colloquium. Nuances in what each educator identifies and struggles with in context of his social justice practice are being unveiled as Darren emphasizes coherence between theory and practice, and a commitment to action., while Michael highlights navigating issues of racial identity, being an outsider to the community, and staying aware of and involved in the social justice struggles facing students.

Part IV: The Colloquium: The History, Design, Curriculum Texts and Intended Impact on Students

Colloquium Design & Purpose: Appropriation, Translation and Invention

The colloquium's curriculum is part appropriation from other sources, part translation of an existent curriculum to this educational space and community, and part invention based on the uniqueness of the two individuals teaching it and their responsiveness to the individuality of their students. Michael and Darren each recount the origins of the social justice colloquium and its evolution as a documentary project that focuses on students examining "their reality" (i.e. the conditions of their lives).

Michael's Explanation: the Colloquium Curriculum's Origins, Purpose and Translation

The Origins. Michael gives details regarding the curriculum design, which is based in an urban sociology class that has been taught in another public high school.

> R: Describe your process for designing the curriculum for the colloquium.
>
> M: It's all based on work our friends did. They taught an urban sociology class at a community high school. They came up with [the documentary project & curriculum]. They did some really impressive projects with their students at that high school [… and] they shared them with us—both just as friends, and then at conferences. We saw them present; we saw their students present. And Darren came to me with the idea last summer to do it here, as a colloquium. So, we asked our friends for their video and their syllabus. We based our syllabus on their curriculum & what they did (Interview 5/8/08).

A key aspect of the curriculum design that Michael & Darren inherited, which Michael mentions here, is students' active participation in the presentation and dissemination of

their work. In the colloquium, students present at conferences, in addition to writing academic papers, participating in community meetings and rallies, and interviewing stakeholders. These activities, which will be further explored in the interviews, suggest that the curriculum is strongly student-centered. These activities further demonstrate how deeply (like their colleagues that designed the original course in urban sociology) Darren and Michael believe in their students as scholars, and want to nurture their confidence and voice in academic and community arenas.

The Rationale behind its translation. Why did Michael and Darren feel that the educational context in which they worked was appropriate for this curriculum? Michael explains their rationale for translating the project to this community and group of students, and also why he feels that the concept of the project reflects effective pedagogy in a variety of environments.

> R: Why was that project translateable to this community? Why would you [bring it to your students]?
>
> M: The idea with [it], and also any class I teach, is that I feel like it is going to be most effective if it's grounded in the lives of the students. The idea of the documentary project is for students to study their own reality, to tell their own story. So, that is translateable anywhere I think. [Our two cities] are obviously unique, but the realities of black and brown youth in cities in the United States have a lot of commonalities across the country whether it's Oakland, Detroit, Chicago, D.C., New York, L.A… It's a pretty similar experience in a lot of ways, unique also. But I think because of that it was even more directly translateable. I think you could, work with youth to study their own reality anywhere in the world

but, the fact that the contexts have a lot in common made it a little easier. Their school was also about 70% Latino and 30% African American. They were juniors in high school the first time they did it. They were also at a small, social justice oriented high school. So the contexts were just so similar that in a lot of ways it wasn't very difficult, very difficult to translate.

R: It sounds like what you were saying as far as a common context, or what the students had in common, was racial identity. Is that a key part of the colloquium? And, without having that racial identity that is oppressed within [many of] the systems of our society—like would a [similar] project work with Caucasian youth?

M: I think you could have any youth in the world study their own reality. I think more than, in addition to racial identity, students have sort of lived material conditions in common. They come from working class families, they try to get by. They come from places—that have the strengths and the weaknesses of, and the problems and the challenges of inner-city America—[that] are similar. We read Malcolm X, *Message to the Grassroots* in the first semester. We read Gromsky; we looked at a Larry Davis story, documentary. So, I think that your theoretical framework that you choose to frame the work could be different, in different contexts…I guess it depends on the angle you're taking and the youth. I'm sure they would [pause] come up with a different product, and their approach might be different, but the idea of having youths study, study their neighborhood, could work with any group (Interview, 5/8/08).

Two points to distill from the above excerpt are: 1. Michael describes the colloquium as translateable (and effective pedagogy) because it is "grounded in the lives of students" and enables them "to study their own reality"; and 2. Michael argues that it is important for students (and especially students of color) to explore their perspectives on social issues and have their communities celebrated and emphasized as worthy of study.

The Purpose of the colloquium. Michael identifies some major features about the colloquium's design. The primary feature is the space and resources included to allow students to study their own reality—this is later described as a curriculum for enabling and preparing students to conduct sociological research. Michael talks about approaching the project with a theoretical framework that is particular to the students that one is teaching, and the context in which one is working (See also *Appendix B: Relevant Curriculum*). Particular to marginalized youth, Michael discusses the importance of students exploring their material conditions, "the strengths and the weaknesses of, and the problems and the challenges of inner-city America" that are similarly experienced by "black and brown youth" throughout the United States.

> I think one of the things that Darren has been really good at bringing out in the class that makes it particular to marginalized youth is that it is [an] opportunity for them to tell their story. Right? Because their story is one that is always told by somebody else. Their story is one that is told in particular ways as part of their marginalization. So that's something where again I think the same idea could *work* in terms of an *educational project* in other places but I don't think it would be as impactful or as important necessarily to do… I still think it would be good

> pedagogy. But I think there's particular reasons why it's especially important to teach this way in this context (Michael, interview 5/8/08).

Michael raises the theme of voice as a key component of the colloquium's purpose. The ability for students to construct their own stories is described as having special significance. Michael describes this significance as fundamentally tied to urban students' experiences of marginalization. Colloquium students experience discrimination due to social identity factors such as race, class, and the neighborhood from which they come. Based on these factors their identities are constructed negatively and deficiently. Michael states that for these students "their story is one that is always told by somebody else. Their story is one that is told in particular ways as part of their marginalization." Alternatively, when students construct and give voice to a counter-story of who they are, their stories become a form of activism for equity because of the development of consciousness necessary and risk involved in challenging dominant views of who they are. Michael and Darren identify the encouragement of student voice and identity as key to students making their perspectives and objectives known to the broader world. Therefore, the colloquium's purpose is two-fold: giving students the opportunity and skill set to analyze and research their realities and also, giving students the resources (i.e. media) to tell their own story as a way to counter illegitimate representations of who they are. Michael describes the first part of this purpose as necessarily democratizing the tools of social research.

> Youth whose intellect has not been affirmed as frequently, or as often, or well as it should be; they can do that stuff [social science research] They can do the work that graduate students do—not with the same level of sophistication but

> that's just because they are in high school and they're sixteen. And, it works in science too but it's different. So, I think, that's one of the reasons I really like teaching social science is we can actually democratize the tools of social research in that way. We can teach people—be they parents, adult community members, or high school students *how* to do research. And how to produce knowledge and that could change the whole game in terms of what gets said about our communities and what is right and what is legitimate. It can also really change our students' identities as they begin to think of themselves as intellectuals and philosophers (Michael, interview 5/8/08).

Michael describes how the interviewing, filming and research (that are essential components of the colloquium's culminating project) are affirming to students. He explains that their intellects have been largely dismissed by society through social stigma associated with "the ghetto" and through disparaging media representations of Latino and African American youth. The rigor of the curriculum in teaching students to conduct social research is validating to their positive sense of identity as scholars, researchers, and philosophers. The content of the colloquium drives its purpose as social research to nurture students' understanding of their lives so that they might improve their conditions through deliberate action.

> Cause [the colloquium], I think is partially about students understanding their own oppression. Understanding why their material conditions are the way that they are, understanding the forces that have created those conditions—and more importantly, how we might be able to overcome them by telling our own story. By understanding why things are the way they are so we can avoid common

> mistakes and patterns of behavior that only exasperate the situation. We can organize people, and talk to people, and teach them about it. So I think that's where the colloquium comes in (Michael, interview 5/8/08).

Social justice education is against oppression and discrimination, which necessitates an understanding of how oppression operates in society and why discrimination exists in context of power. Michael describes the colloquium's purpose as reflecting this dimension of social justice education. He states: "Cause [the colloquium], I think is partially about students understanding their own oppression. Understanding why their material conditions are the way that they are, understanding the forces that have created those conditions—and more importantly, how we might be able to overcome them by telling our own story." Within Michael's description of how the colloquium combats students' oppression, the themes of consciousness and voice reappear explicitly. Social justice education is also about action and reform for equity. This dimension of social justice education encompasses the application of a critical way of seeing the world to action. This means the actions one takes and does not take are formed by this new-found sight. As Michael describes, "By understanding why things are the way they are so we can avoid common mistakes and patterns of behavior that only exasperate the situation". Another piece of social justice education action is the education and organization of *others* to also gain consciousness about the conditions of their lives and then, act collectively for greater equity. Michael acknowledges this in his description of the colloquium's promise: "We can organize people, and talk to people, and teach them about it. So I think that's where the colloquium comes in."

Michael envisions the overarching purpose of the colloquium as liberation—the outcome tied to his affirmation that "[w]e can organize people, talk to people, and teach them". Michael suggests that the curriculum extends the analytical and academic skills of students while allowing them to study a topic of extreme relevancy—their reality. Michael's explanation again raises the concept of critical literacy, which Mulcahy describes as "a mindset" or "a philosophy that recognizes the connections between power, knowledge, language, and ideology, and recognizes the inequalities and injustices surrounding us in order to move toward transformative action and social justice" (2008, p.16). Michael envisions that this transformative action is, in part, students retelling their stories as a consequence of a new mindset that recognizes their relationship to power and social injustice. This final excerpt on the colloquium's purpose aligns rather seamlessly with Michael's understanding of the purpose of education as "a catalyst" for social change and his role in the preparation of his students to be the next Cesar Chavez, Malcolm X or Ella Baker.

Darren's Account: the History, Philosophy, and Translation of the Colloquium

Darren similarly outlines the process of translating the colloquium project to this educational space.

The History. The curriculum for the colloquium, as previously mentioned, was in large part developed by other educators. Darren explains how these educators were also part of founding an urban, community school in another city.

R: Can you talk a little bit about your process for designing the colloquium project?

> D: Actually, it came from two of my guys […] They were at a school, a community high school. And similar to myself, they were founding members of the school. They were on the design team for the school. [It's a] public school—actually it closed last year. They actually came about this process; you know, it was their class—Urban Sociology (Interview 5/13/08).

It is worth pointing out that the theme of community can extend past neighborhood borders to signify a group of people united in another way. The colloquium is a direct result of a community of social justice education practitioners of which Darren and Michael belong. It is their relationship to this community that enabled them to find one another and facilitated the development of the colloquium project. This community of practitioners is seemingly united by the same social justice education principles (i.e. being student-centered and community-centered, being against oppression and discrimination, being critical, being for activism tied to equity) that define many aspects of the appropriated urban sociology curriculum. The community is also characterized as committed to redefining education to reflect those principles.

The Philosophy. Darren elucidates that the innovation of the appropriated curriculum was in how 'urban sociology' was interpreted in a way that was not esoteric, but allowed students to examine meaningful sociological processes—ones that were happening within their community.

> But their whole notion around urban sociology was "Okay, we have all of these sociological processes. But what's relevant to you all's space." And the most relevant space was the space that they come from [the community]. So, if we use these sociological processes to analyze our space. What do we come up with?

> And how does, how can we use media to inform us in this process? (Darren, interview 5/13/08).

The philosophy behind the curriculum was, therefore, one of how to frame sociology in a way that is relevant to students and that utilizes media. By asking students "what's relevant to you all's space" and having them drive the decision-making around examining their community, the curriculum deeply reflects the social justice education dimension of being student-centered and community-centered. Their approach to devising the curriculum's objectives supports the link between combating injustice, prioritizing student voice, and the including marginalized communities from which students come. Curriculum, such as the colloquium, is an extension of community-based knowledge and is a response to students' assets and objectives. It is conceived of by Darren, Michael and their colleagues as essential to the achievement of greater social justice through schooling.

The Translation. The colloquium's format required some necessary changes in the original curriculum and alterations in how the project would be accomplished with their students. Nonetheless, Darren explains why he and Michael were interested in its possibilities.

> So we, me and Michael, have known these guys for years. And just kind of look at their process up-close and then said "Do you think we can kind of formulate this to fit in our colloquium structure?" And we both kind of put our heads together and was like "Yeah, we could do it—but it's going to look a little different." That was really just making those adjustments. But, making those

adjustments based on what they had already set out as a framework (Darren, interview 5/13/08).

Other than a shift in the educational context, the translation of the curriculum from the urban sociology class to the colloquium had to reflect primary changes in course structure (with several fewer class meetings) and accommodate mixed grade levels (ninth through twelfth).

Making Sense of the Colloquium Design & Purpose in Relation to Social Justice

Before delving deeper into the content of the colloquium's curriculum, what can be understood already about the relationship of its purpose and design to social justice? Social justice education necessarily encompasses students feeling that the curriculum helps them to explore and address what is deficient, unfulfilling or marginalizing in their everyday experiences (See section *Social justice education is against oppression and discrimination*). Reflecting upon the details given by Michael and Darren, it is apparent that the colloquium attempts to do exactly that by prioritizing relevancy (in being grounded in the lives of students) and by facilitating students' exploration of pertinent issues through the process of conducting social research. As described, the colloquium's curriculum also fits with social justice education's emphasis on being student-centered and community-centered. The curriculum further supports social justice education's dimension as multicultural because it documents the experiences and voices of community and family members, whose histories are often omitted in mainstream society. Recall that students, whose social identities contribute to their marginalized position within society, are at increased risk for suffering the same marginalization in schools (Hall, 2006 b; Ferguson, 2000; Kozol, 2005; Kunjufu, 2005; Stovall, 2005).

However, in democratizing the tools of social research by putting them in the hands of marginalized youth, the colloquium's design seeks to be liberating, critical, and against the oppression of people (and students) that have traditionally been excluded from the production of research or official knowledge. The themes of consciousness, identity, community, and voice are recurrent and intermingled in the outlining of the colloquium's purpose and philosophy. Darren and Michael describe a curriculum in which students gain consciousness through studying their reality, and subsequently their awareness of their identity and community deepens, resulting in a stronger voice and a reconstruction of the stories that define their lives.

Colloquium's Curriculum: the Content of the Course and the Meaning of its Texts

Examining the content of the course is important to understanding its goals and intended meaning. The textual content does not necessarily make obvious the academic and intellectual skills that teachers model or infuse in their instruction of the curriculum. It is important to note that Darren and Michael were intentional about building students' abilities to conduct social research by guiding them through developing interview guides and techniques, by modeling how to operate as a researcher in the field and glean knowledge from the environment, by demonstrating how to analyze video, code transcripts, and group pieces of information by theme, and by writing and editing papers in collaboration with students and co-presenting them at community meetings and conferences. I witnessed the explicit instruction around some of these activities during my classroom observations, and other activities were mentioned by the teachers during interviews. These activities are not reflected well in the following excerpts describing the curriculum's content, which focuses on the selected texts for the course. However, the

instruction of the curriculum and inclusion of such skill-building is undeniably important to understanding the intended impact of the colloquium. Recall from the literature review that both Gay (2003) and Delpit (1995) raise the importance of teaching explicitly the academic skills necessary for scholarly work in addition to using culturally relevant content in the classroom. Also, the colloquium itself was incredibly action-based with filming and interviewing on location in the community and around the city, with editing footage and applying a soundtrack outside of the colloquium hours, and with meetings and presentations external to class time. These activities are an equally important aspect of the project. In the following excerpts, Darren and Michael talk about the reasoning behind the selection of texts they use during the colloquium, the impact of these texts, and some details regarding their instruction in relationship to the texts.

Michael: Gramsci and Malcolm X

Michael focuses on Antonio Gramsci and Malcolm X in his discussion of the curriculum's content. The readings for the colloquium (included on the class's website) are also listed.

> R: It had five things on the website that you used for materials. It had Malcolm X, *Message to the Grassroots*, the other was *To Mississippi Youth,* and then the Gramsci, the Immortal Technique song, and the Bourdieu piece on *Structure, Habitus and Practices*. I was wondering […] why you picked certain pieces or how you used them to teach what you wanted to teach. Can you talk about any of those?
>
> M: As far as the readings, our friends focused their course around the concepts of *hegemony* and *habitus*. They did it for two reasons that I understand.

One is that those are both really powerful concepts to sort of arm students with, in this analysis of their reality. And secondly, to use such academic and theoretical terms, proves to both the students themselves and to other people, that they can engage in this very academic discourse. They can use these words that people don't expect them to use. And that they can write and talk in ways that we would expect graduate students to write and talk. So, when we designed it, we wanted to preserve that element of their class. We found that last semester because we have many fewer meetings than their class, it is not a traditional academic class like theirs was, our time constraints among other things, hegemony was plenty, we didn't need to go into the Bourdieu. So we didn't use the Bourdieu last semester.

R: So you used the Gramsci.

M: And, Malcolm X and the Immortal Technique (Interview 5/8/08).

Michael reveals the power of using Gramsci with students is in the proof that it provides as to their intellectual abilities. Michael emphasizes that this proof is something that both students and others need. His earlier statements stress the importance of doing social research in proving that students of color and marginalized students are capable of scholarly work. This suggests that the objectives of the curriculum itself are a counter-narrative to commonly-held beliefs about what urban high school students of color can do. Elsewhere, Michael links the intellectual discipline and perseverance needed to tackle Gramsci with the discipline he identifies as necessary for schools and teachers to instill in students for their academic success (See *Appendix C: Goal-Oriented Discipline* for an expanded explanation). Michael and Darren utilize Gramsci to create a critical framework, "to arm students with, in their analysis of their reality". The selection of

Gramsci as a lens for seeing the world speaks to the educators' desire for students to emerge with a commitment to critical thought, liberation, and collective struggle.

Gramsci: a theoretically rich and challenging text. Antonio Gramsci was a Communist party activist, organizer and intellectual in Italy during the rise of fascism under Mussolini, and made significant contributions to Marxist theory around the concept of ideology (Hayward, 2007; Mayo, 2008). Gramsci penned his most influential texts while imprisoned, including those highlighting his concepts of *hegemony* and the *organic intellectual*. Hegemony is a state in which the structure of society "especially in the minds of the exploited and dominated majority" seems "natural," "eternal," and "inevitable", and the commonly held ideas of the populace are those that serve the privileged (Science and Society, 2008, p. 260). In a capitalist society, the hegemonic ideas support market forces that produce wealth for the richest and, mask and legitimize the exploitation of the poorest. Therefore, hegemony "is the *in*capacity of the working classes in capitalist societies to conceive of alternatives" to "capitalist social relations" (Science and Society, 2008, p. 260). According to Gramsci, under hegemony, the exploited people of society reliably maintain the relations of their own oppression. Michael gives further detail about their use of Gramsci in class and how he and Darren framed it so the text was accessible, engaging and meaningful to students.

> The Gramsci piece is a trip because talk about theoretical and academic language…So, the way we introduced it was we said: "Look…uh, this dude was locked up, he was in jail. He is trying to write subversive things but he's got to get them by the guards." "So, how could he get them by the guards?" And the kids said, well, "He could write them in code". And we said: "Exactly, that's

> basically what he's doing." Right? He's writing above the guards' heads. The people who checked his letters couldn't understand what he was saying, so that allowed him to get it out. And so once they started thinking about it, then it becomes this cool thing, about "oh, we're decoding this thing that is meant to subvert this system". Like he's in jail and he's writing so…that became a lot more interesting. So, there was no complaints about working through that language. And there was no complaints about "Why is he writing like this?" because we set it up in a way where ahead of time, "this is why he is writing like this". And they got it. They really understood it (Michael, interview 5/8/08).

Gramsci extends the possibility of being an intellectual to everyone, even those people who are not within traditional systems of education or whose knowledge is not officially valued in society. Since Gramsci proposes that the exploited are ruled by consent, "not simply through force", a reeducation can be the key to people's liberation (Mayo, 2008, p. 419). Persons can develop an intellect that is resistant to society's prevalent ideology. Gramsci believed that individuals with familiarity and access to the culture of power, and yet politically aligned with working class people, could lead this educational work in a variety of social spaces, and described such leaders as *organic intellectuals*. Thus, this theory of "organic" intellect allows students to potentially view themselves and their communities as producers of knowledge that is of collective value, and is against oppression. Michael describes students' response to the piece.

> We introduced the Gramsci piece first. We defined hegemony […] and they got in this good discussion about the difference between a college prep school in the city and a career academy, which is a vocational school… The piece we read on

> intellectuals and hegemony is about how this division amongst people into intellectuals and workers is false. All people have the ability to understand their life and their world and their situation philosophically. That's what a person is. And so that's another important reason why it's part of the project. Because the idea of the colloquium is founded in the belief that our youth, and our students, are organic intellectuals. That they can understand their world philosophically. That they can theorize about their world. That they can, think in those ways so that's exactly what Gramsci's saying in the part that we read (Michael, interview 5/8/08).

Michael infers that the Gramsci piece was selected because of its potential to alter students' perspectives of themselves. A fundamental change in identity is described when students realize their deep capacity to philosophize about their situation, their community, and the broader world. The theme of identity is significant here. Identity (in terms of justice) not only encompasses who one *is* according to society and social identity markers like age, race, and gender. Identity also pertains to how one thinks about oneself. Michael and Darren frequently reference this when they speak of "changing students' identities". They are referring to changing students' perceptions of themselves, and in this case, their perception of themselves as not intellectual, smart or scholarly. Darren and Michael actively combat this belief in students through their instruction and the development of their curriculum. They articulate combating this belief because their understanding is that many of their students have been deprived of self-determination, self-definition, and a positive view of self. Such deprivation depletes the possibility that students recognize their true brilliance, capacity for philosophy, and intrinsic importance

to society and their communities. Hence, Michael's description of Gramsci's affirmation has added significance with regard to the objectives of the colloquium: "All people have the ability to understand their life and their world and their situation philosophically. That's what a person is." Perhaps, the simplest objective of the colloquium is to convince students of this truth.

Malcolm X: transforming teacher's and students' consciousness. While relaying his experiences of reading Malcolm X, Michael reveals how the selected texts of the colloquium are speeches, lyrics, essays and documents that initially transformed Darren and him, having major impact on their conceptualization of justice, race, society and the like. The purpose of Malcolm's speeches in the colloquium is intimately tied to the themes of consciousness, voice and history. These themes are recurrent in Michael's discussion in the following excerpts.

> When I read *Message to the Grassroots*, it blew me away. Like, it made me realize how different of a time we're living in now […] Malcolm X is saying these things in public. It's like, "Oh, my God" people could say—people did—people had the courage to say things like that in public. And I guess you can't really say they *could* because they killed him for it. But, I think he really hit at some ideas that would blow the kids away in a similar way. And *To the Mississippi Youth* I feel like was even more powerful in some ways, it wasn't as shocking but it was directed at youth and, I think that is what was powerful about sharing that with them (Michael, interview 5/8/08).

In other excerpts, Darren similarly expresses how Malcolm X fundamentally impacted his consciousness of society and of racial injustice. Michael speaks directly to the frank

and often provocative nature of Malcolm's language and reveals his perception of its appeal to his students. Michael identifies Malcolm as courageous for his willingness to speak his mind despite great danger and amidst acute hostility. These two excerpts from *Message to the Grassroots*, where Malcolm expounds upon his famous analogy regarding the difference between "the house Negro" and "the field Negro", illustrate Michael's points.

> You have to go back to what the young brother here referred to as the house Negro and the field Negro back during slavery. There were two kinds of slaves, the house Negro and the field Negro. The house Negroes—they lived in the house with the master, they dressed pretty good, they ate good because they ate his food—what he left […] they loved the master more than the master loved himself. They would give their life to save the master's house […] If the master's house caught on fire, the house Negro would fight harder to put the blaze out than the master would […] He identified himself with his master, more than his master identified with himself […] That was the house Negro. In those days he was called a "house nigger." And that's what we call them today, because we've still got some house niggers running around here (Malcolm X, *Message to the Grassroots*, p. 11)
>
> On that same plantation, there was the field Negro. The field Negroes—those were the masses. There were always more Negroes in the field than there were Negroes in the house. The Negro in the field caught hell. He ate leftovers. In the house they ate high up on the hog. The Negro in the field didn't get anything but what was left of the insides of the hog […] The field Negro was beaten from

> morning to night: he lived in a shack, in a hut; he wore cold, castoff clothes. He hated his master. I say he hated his master. He was intelligent […] When the house caught on fire, he didn't try to put it out; that field Negro prayed for a wind, for a breeze. When the master got sick, the field Negro prayed that he'd die […] You've got field Negroes in America today. I'm a field Negro. The masses are the field Negroes (Malcolm X, *Message to the Grassroots,* p. 12).

Malcolm is a powerful example of the importance of the theme of voice in the history of the struggle for social justice. Malcolm's speeches are filled with counter-stories about the national past and the mistreatment of African Americans. Malcolm speaks of history in a way, which is relevant to many African Americans in the modern civil rights struggle for racial justice. Malcolm does not craft his speeches to appeal to the powerful, but seeks to empower the marginalized, black masses that seek out his message of social revolution. Therefore, the language of Malcolm's speeches is familiar and accessible to many black people in the United States. Michael suggests that Malcolm X's speeches' accessibility allowed students in the colloquium to think about the conditions he described in context of their own lives.

> I have the notes on when we read *To Mississippi Youth*…what was interesting is that at the time when we read this, the class was almost a hundred percent Latino. We had only a handful of students that were African American last semester and most of them were added after that so we made some really interesting connections, when we read it, about the historical conditions of blacks and Latinos in the country. He talks about lynching in that speech and the KKK [Klu Klux Klan], and the WCC [White Citizen's Council] and putting down his guns

> when they put down their guns. I brought up the Texas Rangers, who were a group in Texas that lynched Mexicans—tejanos. We talked about people like [inaudible] Tijerina who was sort of similar, he had a similar rhetoric to Malcolm X in New Mexico (Michael, interview 5/8/08).

Michael explained that the inclusion of *To Mississippi Youth* in the curriculum is rooted in its relevancy to young people, who struggle with marginalization. Michael details that the outcome of reading it was students' ability to utilize its ideas in understanding other historical events and to illuminate the struggles of other civil rights activists. The speech also raises the idea of *reciprocity*—that activists and African Americans will only heed to laws, morals and social standards to which *everyone* is held—and the speech revisits the notion of *coherence*—consistency between what is espoused (by white society) and what is embodied (by white citizens). Coherence between words and actions, or beliefs and actions, is something frequently raised by Darren and Michael in terms of integrity or accountability. Reciprocity is a key element of the socialist conceptualization of community and is the foundation for a harmonious social contract established by mutual consent. The tensions between non-violent and violent action are highlighted in *To Mississippi Youth* and are also recurrent throughout the Civil Rights Movement. This passage from the speech, *To Mississippi Youth,* is the one referenced by Michael in the previous excerpt and demonstrates how the speech underscores the necessary negotiation of such tension in social justice action.

> My experience has been that in many instances where you find Negroes talking about nonviolence, they are not nonviolent with each other, and they're not loving with each other, or forgiving with each other […] Usually when they say they're

> nonviolent, they mean they're nonviolent with somebody else […] They are nonviolent with the enemy […] I myself would go for nonviolence if it was consistent, if everybody was going to be nonviolent at the same time. I'd say, okay, let's get with it, we'll all be nonviolent. But I don't go along with any kind of nonviolence unless everybody's going to be nonviolent. If they make the Ku Klux Klan nonviolent, I'll be nonviolent. If they make the White Citizens Council nonviolent, I'll be nonviolent. But as long as you've got somebody else not being nonviolent, I don't want anybody coming to me talking any nonviolent talk […] Now, I am not criticizing those who are nonviolent. I think everybody should do it the way they feel is best […] But as long as I see them teaching nonviolence only in the black community, we can't go along with that. We believe in equality, and equality mean that you have to put the same thing over here that you put over there (Malcolm X, *To Mississippi Youth*, p. 139)

In his speech, Malcolm contends that the state's violence against black people is abusive and discriminatory, and in service of the status quo of racial inequity. As a result, Malcolm identifies these inconsistencies as making non-violent action for black people implausible for securing substantial social and political change for their racial justice. This text offers students of color an opportunity to think deeply about the state's use of force historically and over time. Students can analyze how that history might speak to differences or similarities in their relationship and their community's relationship to government and law enforcement today. Malcolm also highlights how social injustice has negatively impacted relationships within the African American community: "Negroes talking about nonviolence, they are not nonviolent with each other, and they're not loving

with each other, or forgiving with each other". Students reading his words are presented with a theory of oppression—how domination and hatred is perpetuated by the empowered upon the disempowered and in turn, by the disempowered upon the disempowered. Malcolm's speech posits that a lack of reciprocity (or "equality" in actions) within broader society can undermine the existence of feelings of altruism and love within smaller communities, even those that suffer as a result of this broader injustice. Malcolm is attempting to explain the phenomenon of the oppressed sometimes being the worst perpetrators against one another.

Themes across texts and relatedness to social justice education. A key theme emergent in Michael's discussion of these texts is consciousness in terms of the way society works and is structured, and in terms of the history of social interaction. Gramsci's theory of hegemony and organic intellectuals creates a foundation for the curriculum that is critical and liberating. His ideas highlight class-based discrimination and oppression. Michael speaks to using Gramsci in a way that is aligned with key dimensions of social justice education, while also illuminating its purpose in terms of the theme of identity. Malcolm X's speeches emphasize the themes of voice, consciousness, and history. Although having lived in very different contexts, both Malcolm X and Antonio Gramsci are unique examples of deep and sustained sacrifice for social justice action.

Darren: Howard Zinn and the Significance of History as Component of Curriculum

In talking about the curricular texts, Darren gives detail about how history is essential to students' understanding of self. Darren describes the possibility of history as

a refutation of popular media representations that harm students' positive formation of identity.

Zinn: Telling a different set of stories. Darren answers a question about the meaning of history in the colloquium. He explores why the text by Howard Zinn is a vital piece in conveying history's significance.

D: I mean, that piece from Zinn was really important to me. Because history becomes this whole notion around "How do we tell a different set of stories?" There's a different set of stories here. Because there's this kind of agreed upon—I don't know if kind of agreed upon—it's this *imposed* story. And then there's this piece around "Okay, what are the folks even saying?" I think the genius of Zinn is he doesn't use all of this kind of conjecture and innuendo. He says, "Hey, let's read, let's reread the documents." And that's a totally—cause historians can't refute that. Right? They say, "Well, let's reread the documents." "Let's talk about what they were talking about." "What are we leaving out?" And that is why we start with young folks. Them as young folks, all this stuff is being said about them—right? Some true, most of it not. Right? And, then knowing that—how do we kick in another piece? And say, "Hmm, there's something else, there's something that we understand about our lives, as young folks, that's *critically* important to the rest of this world."

R: So, part of the history is about understanding that history is—if I understand what you're saying—is creating stories, storytelling but there's the other part where there is a *record*. There's a record way back there. Is *that* important to students? And why? How is that part of social justice?

D: Well, like this whole notion of retelling that story and including the record. This whole notion of a historical record changing how we view our story. So, being able to research—what is the evidence that we're using to actually substantiate our story? The colloquium project is more visual. But, it could be factual, I mean you could find folks, could find family documents—you know, birth certificates, articles written on family members, interviews—really looking at the context of the story but then connecting it to a larger historical memory in terms of how folks got it. So, if folks' families had these stories around coming to the Midwest from the South. They had this individual story but then there was this larger context. They didn't come by themselves. They came with all these folks—they located in these particular areas. Why did they locate in these particular areas? How did they hear about these particular areas? So these types of spaces [to tell stories] build on a larger trajectory, around history and that history changing our viewpoints or really enabling us to ask a different set of questions—I think that's the most important thing around history. It's not the dates and documents—right? It's really this ability to ask a different set of questions. Like, what was the intention here? Can we locate the intention? In addition to this individual story, what is it a part of? What larger phenomenon do these stories connect to? And then, from that larger phenomenon, how do we begin to actually ask critical questions? (Interview 5/13/08).

Darren describes the Zinn text as laying a foundation for unpacking with students the relationship between individual stories and collective experiences of past events. Viewing history as a collection of people's stories and an ever-changing accumulation of

human experiences is crucial to social justice education's multicultural dimension. The presentation of "rich history" through the use of diverse texts, representing multiple and contradicting viewpoints, can "invite students into the historical dialogue and allow them to connect with the essential ideas of history" (Pettis-Renwick, 2002, p. 32). Zinn is helpful in understanding the depth of history as not "dates and documents" but "this ability to ask a different set of questions". Zinn's general position on history is that its importance is misunderstood. The official record matters, but not necessarily in the way that one is often taught to think. Rather than viewing history as the factual accounting of what happened in the past—instead of reading history as *truth*—one should ask: Who writes history and for what purpose? Zinn reveals that history is not benevolent, and certainly not objective. He depicts the historian as oft intentionally deceptive and biased.

> It's not hard to be a historian, really, you just study things that other people don't know, and then you tell them, and then you try to steer the conversation away from things they know. And you're a historian—it's that simple (Zinn, Chp. 3: *A People's History,* p. 67).

Zinn demystifies the process of making the historical record. His intention is to make transparent the creation of history so that it is accessible to everyone. Zinn accuses powerful people of promulgating history that is deliberately irrelevant with the purpose of disproving the populace's intelligence. Therefore, history often acts as a *distraction* from asking questions about what is pertinent to understanding one's relationship to power. Zinn exposes history as part of the miseducation of youth—disrupting youth's consciousness of power and, thereby, their ability to challenge discrimination and oppression.

Zinn: Developing a critical lens and curiosity through study of history. The Howard Zinn reading enables students to peer behind the curtain of academia and expertise to dissect the nature of history, and other fields of knowledge. Zinn's objectives are closely tied to those of social justice education as critical and liberating. Understanding the process by which history is created prevents students from living as if "they were born yesterday" and believing whatever might be told to them by someone in a position of power. Zinn explains:

> If you don't know important things about history, then it's as if you were born yesterday. And if you were born yesterday, then you will believe anything that is told to you by somebody in authority and you have no way of checking up on it. If you were born yesterday, then you will listen to the president get up before the microphones and the television cameras and say "We must bomb Iraq." And if you knew some history, you might say, "Wait a while. Let me think about this." There have been other presidents who've said let's bomb here, let's bomb there, let's go there, let's invade here. And it's often turned out that behind those exhortations was a whole pack of lies (Zinn, Chp. 3 *A People's History,* p. 69).

To be clear, Zinn advocates a study of history, rather than a dismissal of it. History can be meaningful to consciousness. In fact, Zinn suggests uncovering a truer version of history is key to one's own intellectual autonomy, skepticism, and integrity. One uncovers such history through searching for the subverted accounts of the past and by selectively consuming ideas prorogated by the media and popular culture. The study of history, therefore, as well as the embrace of many genres of knowledge, must be critical and multicultural.

Knowledge of history can create space for doubt. Knowledge of history can facilitate the challenge of authority. History is an activity of construction and is the active making of meaning by human beings with a perspective on the world. Stories about the past necessarily have their limitations in scope and their inevitable omissions. Therefore, as Zinn affirms, history like other fields of knowledge or epistemologies is not established upon fact and universal truth. All fields of knowledge are instituted through a lens, crafted by a particular set of rules, and instituted through methods of knowing things that actively excludes other things. Facts represent judgments and value systems by virtue of their presentation as an important piece of information.

Zinn contends that to understand history as *the meaning ascribed* to past events is to see its purpose and relationship to power differently. Darren similarly raises these issues with students by asking "What is the intention behind the *imposed* story?" How and why is history recorded in the manner that it is? Who does it serve? Darren sees the Zinn text as imperative to developing students' criticality in consuming information about their past, and prompting them to seek out details about their identity, family and communities form alternate sources. In this way, Zinn's perspective on history and Darren's extension of it into the colloquium's curriculum is upholding social justice education's dimension of being multicultural.

> Like, if we look at Latino immigration. How did those first Latino families even come to this city? What was their process? Then, how did certain family members even *hear* about it? What spaces did they work in? What were the laws governing those particular spaces? Around how they got *paid*? What policies were instituted to bring folks to this city? Because I mean, when you think about

laws bringing folks to do farm work, but an Act actually brought folks to do factory work here in this city. Stockyards, textile mills, cookie factories. So this whole notion around how do we begin to ask these larger questions. And, in asking those questions and knowing that, what does that do for your students? It gives them a sense of identity and selfhood. And it also allows them to see, that what is portrayed in the popular media is not necessarily the actual story.

Darren posits that a study of history enables students to refute numerous negative media representations (that too frequently exhibit racialized or gender-based stereotypes). This position supports scholars' research on the significance of multicultural education. Gay states: "[E]ducators must systematically weave multicultural education into the central core curriculum" and instruction of "reading, math, science, and social studies" (2003, p. 32). Alternatively, "lack of access to equitable information" about the notable achievements of people with which students identify can lead to students' feelings of disconnection from society and their communities, a devaluation of their peoples' accomplishments and struggles, and disillusionment with the study of history itself (Pettis-Renwich, 2002, p. 33). The study of history, as Darren describes it above, has great potential to validate the resilience and contributions of students' communities and families. This validation has a direct impact on students' understanding of themselves.

R: It seems like what you're saying is the media portrayal of their [students'] social identity… You're saying there's a danger of them believing that without this history?

D: Uh-hmm, cause you just capitulate to it because it's what you see. There's no interruption—again, there's no interruption in terms of how to ask a different

set of questions. You just kind of watching and saying "I know a couple folk like that—yeah that's fucked up." But then, but even a question as simple is "Is that everybody?" You know, can we say without a doubt that *every teenager*, every black and Latino teenager is smoked-out, wild, sex-crazed, *super-predators*?

R: Are you saying that the stakes are so high? That in a sense, this sort of hegemonic media representation of certain social identities like Latino youth, or black youth—it has the power to affect one's *own* sense of self and identity so much? Then [are you] also speaking to how it affects familial relations—like how your mom looks at you? You think the stakes are *that* high?

D: Yes, without question. (Interview 5/13/08).

In this excerpt, Darren discusses the study of history as a necessary "interruption" in the barrage of negative media that often constructs his students' identities for them. Consequently, as discussed above, history can facilitate students' development of new identities, and thereby, changing their quality of participation in their families, community and broader society. These capacities of history connect the Zinn text to several, aforementioned key themes and principles of social justice education (i.e. community, identity, consciousness and history as well as being community-centered, student-centered, multicultural, critical, liberating and against discrimination).

Immortal Technique: Linking Domestic and Global Racist, Capitalist-based Oppression

Michael mentions listening to the music of hip hop artist, Immortal Technique during college. Immortal Technique's lyrics to *The Poverty of Philosophy* were one of the texts used in the colloquium with students. The document analysis identified several places where the lyrics highlight the relationship between domestic and global

oppression. In them, Immortal Technique explores exploitation tied to American imperialism and a global capitalist market, which he views as undermining Latino unity and separating American Latinos from their identity. Issues of community and identity are present throughout Immortal Technique's lyrics, which lay bare the relationship of these two themes to power and the perpetuation of oppression. His lyrics are a counter-narrative challenging the history on record, and reeducating those who discount the importance of Latino heritage.

Consciousness. Immortal Technique contends that the extreme poverty or hardship experienced by Latinos in American ghettos erodes their capacity to philosophize about the causes of their present conditions. "Most of my Latino people who are struggling to get food, clothes and shelter in the hood are so concerned about that, that philosophizing about freedom and socialist democracy is usually, unfortunately beyond their rationale" (Immortal Technique, *The Poverty of Philosophy*). Immortal Technique suggests that the urgency of survival crowds out the intellectual space necessary to effectively and collectively imagine social change. The institutions of American society imprison the minds of the poor and minorities in a market-based, racist logic. Such institutions are characterized as elusive, covert, and as projecting blame for their atrocities on the disempowered. Immortal Technique raises the issue of consciousness in relationship to oppression. He determines that severe economic oppression is perpetuated by the clouding of marginalized people's consciousness regarding the origins of their poor living conditions.

Immortal Technique identifies individuals occupying covert positions of power within society as the true exploiters, or the common enemy of the oppressed. Part of American hegemony, according to *The Poverty of Philosophy*, is people succumbing to an illusion of power and a normalization of exploitation as an inevitable part of interaction with others.

> We're given the idea that if we didn't have these people to exploit then America wouldn't be rich enough to let us have these petty material things in our lives and basic standard of living. No, that's wrong. We have whatever they kick down to us (Immortal Technique, *The Poverty of Philosophy*).

Immortal Technique's lyrics reveal that a false sense of privilege within the capitalist system allows for its reproduction; it legitimizes the exploitation of others over "petty material things" that are implicitly valued in the global economy over fairness or a base standard of living for all people. The false sense of privilege described here is not unlike the capitalist ideology that Gramsci describes as the foundation for impoverished people's consent to their own oppression. Gramsci and Immortal Technique similarly rely upon a Marxist understanding of capitalist oppression. They apparently seek to reeducate the dominated for the achievement of greater economic justice. In Immortal Technique's case, this economic justice is closely tied to racial justice as well as it is in the philosophizing of Martin Luther King Jr., Marcus Garvey and Malcolm X.

History and voice. According to *The Poverty of Philosophy*, liberation from capitalist, racist logic is rooted in challenging the dominant narratives of history through the construction of counter-stories.

> Poverty has nothing to do with our people. It's not in our culture to be poor [L]ook at the last 2000 years of our [Latinos'] existence and what we brought to the world in terms of science, mathematics, agriculture and forms of government. You know the idea of a confederation of provinces where one federal government controls the states? The Europeans who came to this country stole that idea from the Iroquois. The idea of impeaching a ruler comes from an Aztec tradition. That's why Montezuma was stoned to death by his own people 'cause he represented the agenda of white Spaniards once he was captured, not the Aztec people who would become Mexicans (Immortal Technique, *The Poverty of Philosophy*).

Immortal Technique disputes the depiction of Latinos as poor intellectuals and as inferior to individuals of European descent. He emphasizes their creativity, nobility and influential history on those, who have exploited them. Immortal Technique exemplifies how without a platform for communication—whether it be music, writing or orating—the critical consciousness of an individual would remain trapped within. A significant aspect of oppression is how the loss of voice, which is the loss of identity's expression, stunts the evolution of one's ideas and negatively impacts the potential influence of those ideas on others. The lyrics demonstrate how voice is central to the extension of individual identity into community identity. Latino identity is the basis for unity in Immortal Technique's lyrics. He identifies the unearthing of identity as the process by which people come to see they should be unified against larger oppressive forces. This unearthing happens through voice—through the expression and redefinition of oneself in relation to society and others.

Compromise, conformity and state complicity. Immortal Technique warns of the impact of compromise and conformity on identity and self-determination.

> Nigga talk about change and working within the system to achieve that. The problem with always being a conformist is that when you try to change the system from within, it's not you who changes the system; it's the system that will eventually change you. There is usually nothing wrong with compromise in a situation, but compromising yourself in a situation is another story completely (Immortal Technique, *The Poverty of Philosophy*).

Immortal Technique's criticism of compromise raises an interesting tension between individuals and groups, between identity and community, between unity and self-determination. Being too individualistic in one's pursuit of wealth or happiness presents an issue in terms of the preservation of the unity and altruism needed for community, and in terms of furthering the perpetuation of oppression. However, Immortal Technique's lyrics here state that too much compromise can lead to a negative impact on identity even though "there is usually nothing wrong with compromise in a situation". So, what constitutes "compromising yourself in a situation"? What is a system if not the aggregation of people? How does the system differ from community? The difference seemingly between a group of people that form "community" and those that encompass "the system" would be the group's approximation to power and privilege and their utilization of state-related force and resources. Immortal Technique implies that there are groups of people or there are contexts within which one must compromise for the common pursuit of justice and well-being and then, there are others in which one must not

compromise because they undermine social justice by some mechanism. Also, there is necessarily a need to distinguish between the pursuit of identity tied to community and identity strictly tied to self-pursuit. The complication of distinguishing one context from another and one group of people from another appears to be the piece around consciousness and being critical for which Gramsci, Immortal Technique and Zinn strive. Consciousness is the struggle for one's liberated mind so one may reason through the complexity of whether a particular action or compromise is leading to oppression and injustice or combating it.

Immortal Technique clearly does not identify country or government with community, but with exploitive systems tied to the legacy of colonization. He criticizes the governments for failing to protect their people from overt forms of exploitation (i.e. capitalism, imperialism). "Latino America is a huge colony of countries whose presidents are cowards in the face of economic imperialism" (Immortal Technique, *The Poverty of Philosophy*). Capitalism, as a global system of power, is described as leading to the worldwide exploitation of people at the hands of their corrupt governments, and developed nations. "You see, third world countries are rich places, abundant in resources, and many of these countries have the capacity to feed their starving people and the children we always see digging for food in trash on commercials" (Immortal Technique, *The Poverty of Philosophy*). First world greed utilizes the capitalist system and media to normalize relations of exploitation that not only abuse people but also their environments. National inaction and complicity are described by Immortal

Technique as neglect, but also as outright abuse. States can be complicit, but also deliberate in subjecting their people to varying levels of foreign and domestic terror. Immortal Technique argues there is intent in the ways in which states refuse to ensure rights and protections for all their citizens.

The use of Immortal Technique in the colloquium's curriculum is in support of social justice education's commitment to be against oppression and discrimination. Immortal Technique raises consciousness about the means by which people are dominated on a global scale. Related to that, his lyrics affirm social justice education's dimension of being critical and liberating—critical of the way in which power operates and the world is legitimated, and liberating in the mission to unify with others to solve issues of discrimination and economic exploitation. Further, Immortal Technique speaks to the unearthing of a history that is more inclusive of Latinos' contribution to the imperialist, developed world. His inclusion in the colloquium, therefore, contributes to greater multiculturalism in school curriculum (a key dimension of social justice education).

Synthesizing the Meaning between Curriculum Texts

Between the Gramsci, Malcolm X, Immortal Technique and Howard Zinn readings, the six themes pertaining to social justice (consciousness, history, voice, action, identity and community) are amply explored with students through the curriculum. All of the pieces directly advocate a disposition against oppression and discrimination, relating to the first dimension of social justice education identified in the literature review. Malcolm X, Howard Zinn and Immortal Technique straightforwardly discuss the identities and histories of a diversity of people, particularly marginalized minorities. The

inclusion of Malcolm X and Immortal Technique in the course demonstrates Darren's and Michael's understanding of the importance of multiculturalism in a social justice curriculum. The third dimension of social justice education, being student-centered and community-centered, is best reflected in Darren and Michael's reasoning behind the selection of the texts as relevant to the students' realities and the identity of their community. All of the texts are critical in their dissection of society, history and power, and all of them speak of liberation whether through revolution, the study of history, the reeducation of the masses, the resistance to global economy, or the expression of identity. As a result of their deep intellectualism, criticality and strategizing around freedom, reading the texts with students creates spaces for learning that are potentially transformative and liberating. Finally, these pieces promote action tied to the attainment of greater equity in how society functions. They advocate activism and reform that will bring about social change.

Exploring the Reasoning behind the Selection of Curriculum Texts

How did Darren and Michael select these texts? Revisiting the concepts of appropriation, translation, and invention, can be helpful in comprehensively exploring this question. Michael and Darren clearly appropriated several aspects of their friends' curriculum including texts—particularly the Gramsci piece. Darren and Michael chose to translate the Gramsci text into their own educational context, reasoning that it would retain the original power it had with students in the prior Urban Sociology course. In its translation, Michael explains Darren's and his inventiveness in scaffolding the instruction around the text so that was accessible and relevant to their students.

Malcolm X was evidentially included in the curriculum because it had retained its earlier significance to Darren. Recalling its influence on the development of Darren's consciousness and his understanding of history and justice in America suggests probable grounds for including it in the course. It also struck Michael as something that his students would relate to well and it had significance to Michael in his own dissection of current race relations in society. With regard to translation, Michael identified aspects of the speeches that would presumably hold similar meaning for students. Malcolm X's speeches demonstrate a series of appropriation: Michael reads them because of Darren; Darren reads them due to his friend in high school; their students read them as a result of their involvement in the colloquium project.

Michael cites Immortal Technique's music amongst the things that have deeply influenced his understanding of social justice, particularly while he was in college. In hoping to recreate that impact on his students' understanding of justice, it is comprehensible why Michael chooses *The Poverty of Philosophy* song for the colloquium. The lyrics are critical, provocative, and accessible and demonstrate social theorizing from an alternate perspective.

Lastly, the piece by Howard Zinn is something that Darren selects because of its pertinence to his own understanding of history in relationship to the construction of counter-narratives. It would seem Zinn has significantly impacted Darren's instructional practices, which frequently include storytelling as a way of conveying knowledge to students and as a platform for helping students to come to their own understanding of things.

Loosely conceived, *appropriation*, *translation*, and *invention* can describe processes by which texts, and also ideas pertaining to social justice are inherited from others, media and society more broadly, and subsequently mediated by past experiences and present conditions, and then, translated into other contexts to create (i.e. invent) new meaning. These processes do not represent chronological steps in the exchange of ideas within social justice education, but are actually simultaneous, messy, and complex. Nevertheless, as these excerpts confirm, recurrent themes important to social justice can be identified and enduring dimensions of social justice education can exist across contexts. The recurrence of Marxist philosophy (from Gramsci to Marcus Garvey to Immortal Technique) is one example of how a particular philosophy around justice (i.e. economic justice) can get revisited at different times, in various contexts. The philosophy might alter somewhat or even bend substantially to the context, and yet there remains some core truth in what the philosophy offers regarding the meaning and obtaining of justice. In this case, the core truth that Marxism has retained through these individuals' appropriation and translation of the philosophy is that capitalism has frequently incentivized people to exploit one another for profit, and in doing so, it has undermined altruism, which is an essential component of building community and is imperative to maintenance of equity in society, more broadly.

Colloquium's Impact on Students and Intended Outcomes

What is the relationship between the colloquium's curriculum and the outcomes Darren and Michael are seeking in society? How do they view their curriculum's impact on their students in the short term and long term? Darren and Michael offer their

observations, impressions and hopes regarding the impact of the colloquium on their students and the broader impact of their social justice work in education.

Darren: Impact on Students' Engagement and Defense of Identity & Community

Darren responds to a question about what impact he sees the colloquium having on students thus far, and whether he see it influencing their sense of identity. His response highlights changes in community engagement as well as alterations in students' perception of things.

> D: Folks [students] are able to ask different questions and look at stuff a little different. Like, I always think about Juan and Marcella—[they] are the only freshman in the colloquium. But Marcella comes to *everything*. Like, we'll say something and Marcella is there—Boom! It's not even *a question* about whether or not she's going to come […] I mean it's that, with her, willingness and wanting to come and really processing it and seeing this other world. And I see this thing with her; Marcella wants to see this *other world*. She really just wants to push this whole piece around. Juan was a little more introverted. But Juan has this thing that "Man, who the hell, who the hell are these people comin' in our shit tellin' us about our shit? No! This is our—if you ain't from here, if you *ain't from here*, don't be talkin' crazy. Come to us first before you get into all this stuff about what's happening with black and brown youth in our spot. No, uh-uhh." I mean this thing, "this is our shit. Don't get this twisted." And *claiming* that […] and even in the fact of having repeat students [enroll in the colloquium]. That kind of shows us, "Okay, we was doing something that folks was connected" because they all came back.

MG: With *using media*, why not just have them [students], write about it [their neighborhood, their experiences]? I mean you're having them write about it but with the purpose of getting published or presenting it, right? If this is for self-definition, why the media piece and why the publication part?

DS: Well, it's active participation. Because one of the things about order and compliance and traditional school models is the teacher as imparter [of knowledge]…and that's not necessarily—the space. The thing that me and Michael try to get across is that there's this exchange—education is the exchange. Not one person being more learned. But the *exchange* of what we learned […] the whole notion of being active in the process […] just to be able to engage it and say, "Okay, if we got these questions"…Boom (slaps fist in hand)! "What are we doing?" What are we going to do in that process?

Darren hopes students are impacted by a concept of education as an exchange of ideas—he wants their impression of knowledge to be something that is equitable and shared as opposed to something that is imparted. This viewpoint on how education should be an exchange between students and teachers is closely related to social justice education as student-centered, but also social justice education as critical. Recall from the literature review, that these two dimensions of social justice education mirror the work of Paulo Freire, who spoke at length about the falseness of the teacher-student dichotomy. In Freire's crticism of a "banking concept of education, knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing. […] The teacher presents himself to his students as their necessary opposite; by considering their ignorance absolute" (Freire, 2005/1970, p. 72). Alternatively, an aspect

of student-centered education is valuing the knowledge, skills and experiences that youth bring with them to the classroom and educational settings by allowing them to co-construct the learning environment (Hall, 2006 a; Stovall, 2005). Moreover, being critical is helping students to identify multiple sources of knowledge including their community, families and own experiences. In education, injustice is embedded in assumptions about who possesses knowledge that is of value. Such assumptions regarding what is valuable knowledge and with whom it resides can dehumanize some students and signifies one of the most discriminatory aspects of schooling. The exclusivity of who possesses knowledge can inhibit students' realization of their own potential as natural teachers and organic intellectuals.

Darren hopes the engagement and changes he has observed in his students as a result of their involvement in the colloquium will be sustained, and will lead students to participate in social change processes with others. His excerpt speaks to social justice education's goal of activism and reform for equity. Darren states the point of the colloquium's projects is its "active participation", which challenges the "order and compliance" of "traditional school models" and the teacher as imparter [of knowledge]" Activism within social justice education is "aimed at increasing inclusivity, fairness, empowerment, and equity […] especially for heretofore oppressed and silenced groups" (Marshall & Anderson 2009, p. 12). Darren's description of Juan's feelings about his community highlights a student who has become increasingly empowered to defend his identity through the work of the colloquium. Juan, despite being "introverted", is more apt to express his will and that of his community, which has been silenced in some way by negative representations.

Darren: Students' Intellectual and Physical Change, and Transition into Adulthood

The mental and physical changes that Darren witnesses in students over the course of their four years in high school parallels what he identifies as their simultaneous development of independence. In the following excerpt, Darren describes why high school is a time when students are ripe for deeper understanding of the nuances of struggle for social change.

> DS: I'm always amazed at the *physical* change in students over their four years in high school. Right? But I'm also amazed by their *mental* development. They start to look at stuff differently because they are developing this certain type of independence. So they have to do stuff in a different way, with a different approach. So, this whole notion of *really* providing that example and to say it's not this grandiose thing, right? You know, struggle is *protracted*. So it's not this thing—because a lot of times we think about somebody having a march or protest, "Okay, shit changes." No. You actually have to have this… struggle has to be continuous, to see these results that you're trying to put forward. And one of the best places to see that is within yourself. So how do you think, talk and act?

This excerpt speaks largely to the theme of identity and its relationship to social change and notions of justice. In high school, adolescents are growing physically into young adults but they are also undergoing growth mentally. Their brain is developing, they are gaining social experiences, and their ability to reason conceptually deepens. This essential time in life, where aspects of change (mental, physical, and social) are heightened, presents in Darren's mind the opportunity to develop students' sense of social responsibility. After all, social responsibility is derived essentially from an

understanding of oneself. As previously mentioned, when Darren and Michael talk about changing students' identities, they are talking about impacting the way that students perceive themselves, perceive their own capacities, and perceive their role in relation to others. Darren identifies that the wealth of change in identity development that high school students undergo as a result of this natural maturation process aids in the possibility in that students will also develop social consciousness—based in an altruism not unlike that described in the theme of community or in the literature review's description of socialist values. This altruism is in defense of community, of people who are exploited, and of a unity balanced by self-determination.

Darren argues that offering opportunities for students to do things in their community and to impact change in society is part of his aim in developing their social consciousness, but also is a part of effective high school pedagogy. The colloquium fosters the positive development of students' independence and transition into self-actualized, successful adults. The activities of the colloquium provide students with an arena for experimenting with varied approaches in how to "think, talk, and act" for the purpose of social transformation. Here again, the dimension of social justice education as activism and reform for equity is reinforced by social justice education's commitment to being student-centered, in positively supporting students' maturation upon multiple planes while nurturing students' criticality and sense of independence.

The primary impact that Darren identifies the colloquium as having is a change in students' consciousness and level of engagement in the community. He dreams that the initial social justice work accomplished by students will become a long-lasting

commitment to protracted struggle that builds upon the empowerment students experienced during the colloquium, and is sustained through adulthood.

Darren's Hopes for Social Change: Consciousness, Voice, and Collective Struggle

Darren describes what he hopes for, including an explanation of the consciousness and access to knowledge that he wishes others to have in making decisions that structure their lives, and impact the collective.

> D: I hope for my students, the folks that I interact with, not even [just] students in the traditional sense but fellow investigators. I hope for a space where they will be able at any given point to make an informed decision [about] anything, *anything* they're faced with—any piece that they are dealing with. That they're able to look at that spot and *piece* out who the folks are to talk to, if they don't know already themselves. And [then] to *move* on whatever that issue is, in a particular way. And *that* becomes the key—to be able to make an *informed* decision. And really to do that—no matter *what* they're faced with. No matter what the situation. And then look at their work as part of this larger collective struggle to change their conditions, not their stuff individually, but who do they team up with? And work in coalition with to do this type of work?
>
> R: Is there a clear connection in your mind between that and social justice?
>
> D: Yes. Because that's the whole process—when you talk about change agents or being able to change a particular process. "How are you able to analyze this thing?" And look at this thing from a number of different angles. That involves their own analysis—even collecting different opinions from different bodies[…]

R: So to have the kind of information you're talking about, to experience social justice, requires that voices are not silenced?

D: Very much so, very much so—I would definitely say that—being able to value yourself and others in your process. This whole notion around yourself and others, and yourself as who you are *to* yourself but [also] who you are in these collective spaces.

R: Because other's voices matter to you—to your information, to you being informed?

DS: Exactly (Interview 5/8/08).

Reflecting his description of education as an exchange, Darren talks of the proliferation of voices he sees as necessary to a just society of conscious citizens. This mass of voices links back to his use of Zinn in support of building multicultural and critical curriculum. In the above excerpt, listening to others is equated with valuing oneself and the collective (themes of identity and community). The themes of identity and community, and particularly the relationship and tensions between them, run throughout Darren's discussion of building a critical consciousness in order to affect social change. Recognizing one's conditions as tied to a protracted, collective struggle remains a key piece of Darren's vision of social justice. In terms of social justice education, Darren's focus on the consciousness of students, on their positive formation of identity, and then, on their ability to be effective activists, makes sense in relationship to what he hopes for in society. Darren infuses his desire to see a conscious populace (that has self-respect and also respect for community) in the objectives of his classroom curriculum.

Michael: Impact of Colloquium on Students and Community

Development of "sociological imagination". Michael believes that that the colloquium project is mostly influencing students' perception of themselves through positioning them as social researchers. Although, he acknowledges that it is hard to know to what extent the work impacts students' lives.

R: What impact do you believe the project is having on the students?

M: I don't know I guess, I think that's always a hard question to answer. Sometimes the impact doesn't manifest itself for years. It's one of the things I've recognized in teaching, but especially with a non-academic project. It's hard to tell sometimes, and obviously the impact is going to vary tremendously from one student to the next. Our three students that have been doing a lot of interviews, I think have really come to sort of see themselves as social scientists in a way. They've really gotten good at the interviews. You can see that the quality has gotten a lot better. And they like doing the interviews. They like walking around with a camera and notebook. And, someone like Calvin, has really gotten into the writing side of it. Darren has been working with them on the writing. And he, I don't know if it has changed his identity in respect to this; he's always been willing to engage intellectually. But I guess you call it— the famous line—or famous phrase is "sociological imagination." Last week when we were walking around the neighborhood and we stopped to see if we could talk to some of the day laborers, Calvin was really curious and was asking us a lot of questions about what they were doing and how the situation worked. And when we were watching the interviews today, he was focused on it. I think one thing that it [the colloquium project] hopefully does is that it has that impact on their identity in

> terms of whether they consider themselves to be social scientists or philosophers (Interview, 5/8/08).

"Sociological imagination" is a term used by sociologist, C. Wright Mills, to describe the ability to see the behavior or actions of individual people as tied to the happenings and forces of greater society (Mills, 1959). This type of imagination is at the heart of critical consciousness as described by Paulo Freire, as well as what Zinn identifies as the anecdote to "being born yesterday". The ability to see one's actions in relationship to others is also the foundation of the theme of consciousness used in this study's framework. Mills did not believe that the development of sociological imagination allowed for the separation of the sociologist's world from his or her work life, but that sociological research was in fact "designing a way of living" that impacted the sociologist infinitely because it impacted what the sociologist could see (Mills, 1959, *Appendix: On Intellectual Craftsmanship*). Mills states:

> Scholarship is a choice of how to live as well as a choice of career; whether he knows it or not, the intellectual workman forms his own self as he works toward the perfection of his craft; to realize his own potentialities, and any opportunities that come his way, he constructs a character which has as its core the qualities of the good workman (Mills, 1959, *Appendix: On Intellectual Craftsmanship*).

One of the qualities of Mills' good workman (i.e. sociological researcher) is someone who is continuously examining, reflecting upon, and reinterpreting his or her life experience. Scholarship, to a sociologist, "is the center of yourself and you are personally involved in every intellectual product upon which you may work" (Mills, 1959, Appendix: On Intellectual Craftsmanship). Mills explains the reasoning behind this

involvement is the inevitable impact of the accumulation of one's experience on what one can do and understand: "To say that you can have experience, means, for one thing, that your past plays into and affects your present, and that it defines your capacity for future experience" (Mills, 1959, Appendix: On Intellectual Craftsmanship).

Helping students to develop "sociological imagination" through the colloquium supports students' understanding of their world at large, and particularly of how knowledge and meaning is created, recorded, accumulated and valued. To the extent such imagination supports students' ability to record and celebrate the ideas of a diversity of people; the colloquium's work upholds the key principle of social justice education as multicultural. To the extent that this sociological work leads to students' comprehension of why certain knowledge is valued and has been recorded and other knowledge has traditionally not, the colloquium contributes to students' criticality of how sociology and similar fields have historically skewed the identities and capacities of certain groups of people (Egan, 2002).

While the colloquium supports these dimensions of social justice education as both multicultural and critical, its curriculum also, again, raises the theme of identity in relation to justice. Students' transformation, as a result of seeing themselves as social scientists changes students' level of interest in their outside world. As Mills explains, this development of a "sociological imagination" does not allow for the separation of one's world from one's scholarship, or one's sense of self from one's scholarly purpose, or one's scholarly purpose from the experiences that one has had to this point. Such a transformation is described by Michael and Darren as increasing students' engagement and curiosity in their community, and elevating their perception of their own academic

capacities and purpose. Moreover, such a purpose can have a meaningful role in validating students' experiences as uniquely positioning them to see the world sociologically and record the experiences of others. Mills states "your past plays into and affects your present… it defines your capacity for future experience"; such a notion speaks to the importance of experience in determining identity and capacity for action. In situations where students' cumulative experience has negatively defined their relationship to education and hindered their ability to combat negative representations of themselves and their communities, an interruption of sorts in both their education and experience more generally must occur in order to broaden their future prospects for changing the social conditions of their lives.

Validation of the community and students' realities. Michael describes the colloquium as hopefully validating to students' intellects, but also emphasizes that its significance in validating students' environments and lives.

> I also think that it legitimizes *their* reality and their neighborhood and their community as something worthy of study and thought and philosophy. I hope that they are getting that out of it. I think that also what it hopefully does is, as to their identity, this piece of sort of a producer of film and knowledge. The documentary film piece is important in that—media, when we talk about stereotypes with them and hegemony, and relate those two concepts very closely. They talk a lot about the media and like I said before, one of the things that marginalizes our students is always somebody else telling their story. And so, by making their *own* media, hopefully they can feel—that's not how it *has* to be. We can produce our own media too and with things like YouTube, we can actually

disseminate it more than we could have 10 years ago. I hope that one of the impacts it has on them is sort of thinking about that (Michael, interview 5/8/08).

Michael speaks not only of democratizing social research through the colloquium project but also furthering the popularization of media-making by youth in society. The colloquium is capitalizing on innovations in media that have broadened access to and quality and affordability of devices that produce video and audio recordings. Teaching students how to utilize recording devices, software, online applications, etc. for producing their own pieces helps to democratize popular media, by increasing the voices and diversity of representations of youth of color that are being put out into society.

This use of media is clearly tied to the themes of identity and voice. It is through media that students give voice to their own conceptions of self and their communities. Film, visual arts, audio recording and the like enables students to create and disseminate representations of people of color and of commonly marginalized individuals in society that combat the status quo. As Michael stated, this access to media opens up new possibility for students' self-definition: "…one of the things that marginalizes our students is always somebody else telling their story. And so, by making their *own* media, hopefully they can feel—that's not how it *has* to be."

Strengthening relationships and civic engagement. Michael observes that the work of the colloquium has started to broaden and strengthen students' relationships to their community and city. The colloquium has done so through students' participation in scholarship that examines relevant issues to their lives and neighborhoods, and through students' access to opportunities for greater civic engagement.

> One good thing that happened this semester that didn't happen so much last semester, is we have been taking them [students] to lots of conferences, meetings, events in the community and in the city at large so I think the ones who have been attending those have started to see themselves as involved in this larger group of people who are working on community issues in the city. Because they will see a lot of the same people at these things, right? There's a limited number of people unfortunately involved in this work. They'll see the same people. They'll *hear* people talk about the same things […] And when we get to conferences and places, and [have] outside interviews with people that aren't part of the school, it legitimizes a lot of the discussions that we have in the school. Because I think sometimes students think: "We're a high school organized around social justice. Like, this is just what my teachers are into and these are just conversations that happen in our building." It's good for them to see people using the same language and concerned about the same things in other contexts. Because again, that [legitimizes] their knowledge. Then they are like "Oh, I know this stuff. And people around this city are talking about this stuff and I can engage in this conversation." So they start to feel part of this larger community of people who are working on these issues, which hopefully could be powerful in the long run in terms of students staying involved, getting involved (Michael, interview 5/8/08).

Michael sees potential in the sense of empowerment students experience as a result of having a voice in community and city affairs. Students 'voices are nurtured by, informed by and validated by their work in the colloquium, but such work can be a potential foundation for their continued commitment to social justice if they can see the possibility

of using the voice beyond the colloquium's context. Michael hopes that such meetings and conferences, and the connections that students make at them will impress upon students the belief that they can have influence outside of the school. Here the potential sustainability of the colloquium is revealed in its support of social justice education's dimension of activism and reform for equity. Michael observes the impact that students' activism is having on their own sense of self as their voices extend beyond the school into the community, and into social forums where students have a new found confidence in their ability to participate in the formation of society.

The World Michael Envisions: Education to Support Social Change

Michael reveals that the world he envisions is one in which his students are empowered to bring about widespread social change. He hopes that their education will prepare them to make such changes.

> I hope for my students to transform the world and I hope for them to be personally fulfilled as they do that. I guess that I hope for drastic redirection, and drastic change. I hope for the breaking down of the systems of power that we talked about earlier.

Michael expresses that he doesn't know what the change looks like but he believes that education will be essential to supporting it.

> R: Do you have a vision of what that looks like?
>
> M: The process or the outcome?
>
> R: Maybe either…
>
> M: Not a clear one, not an especially clear one. […] I think mostly attempts to make this world less governable than it is now will be to further exploitation

> rather than less[en] exploitation. So as far as process goes, obviously doing what I do, I think the primary component to that is education. There's no way that drastic change can happen without education being the primary means by which people's worldview supports that change (Interview 4/23/08).

Michael hopes for the drastic redirection of society; he hopes that his students will be the ones to lead that work, and he knows that it must happen through collective efforts in education. In this last excerpt, Michael's statements bring to mind the definition of social justice education offered by Bell: Social justice education is both process and goal. "The goal…is full and equal participation of all groups in society", equal "distribution of resources", and an environment where all individuals feel "physically and psychologically safe and secure" (Bell, 1997, p. 3). However, the process is continuous and nebulous in that (as Michael states) it depends fundamentally upon a change in "people's worldview" which must support a drastic redirection toward a more just society. Michael sees education as the "primary means" by which people's minds can change. Perhaps, as he hopes, Michael's students will be the social actors who lead this change, being simultaneously self-determined and interdependent in their activism, and having a "sense of their own agency as well as a social responsibility toward and with others" (Bell, 1997, p. 3).

Michael and Darren: The Worlds They Hope For

Darren and Michael describe the world that they hope for in terms of their students and more generally. Darren expresses the hope for everyone he knows to have the ability to make conscious decisions in their life, and to have the capacity to seek out the information that will drive their understanding. Darren hopes his students will inhabit

a world where a proliferation of voices and ideas structures a collective struggle and supplies the foundation for a broader, more inclusive community. Michael hopes for mammoth social change. He dreams of a society that is transformed from the systems of power that now structure it to one that "preserves community self-determination and allows for difference". He hopes that education will establish the means by which exploitation is eliminated through a change in people's worldview. Finally, Michael hopes that his students will be "personally fulfilled" in their struggle to bring about this social change for justice.

VI. Conclusions

The first sentence of this thesis is the essential postulation of this work: "the phrase 'social justice' can reflect a multitude of perspectives, life experiences, and political, intellectual and cultural traditions". Rather than being a dogma, social justice is an open question, as Darren states: "How do you actually engage in social justice?" Negotiation around what social justice encompasses is a key part of preserving the struggle itself because social justice efforts need reflect a diversity of perspectives and visions of what society should be. By extension, social justice education is not one thing. It is many simultaneous (and perhaps, at times, seemingly contradicting) efforts toward greater equity in education. Social justice education is a protracted conversation. Social justice education is a continuous process of reform and reflection.

The study's purpose is reliant upon the core conjecture that social justice is reflective of many things that would be impacted by a teacher's life course in its inclusion in the classroom—namely, the teacher's values, motivation for teaching, and perception of justice. Toward realizing the purpose of this research, the primary goal was to gain a broader understanding of how educators' values, life experiences and political motivations impact their content and intended outcomes of curriculum for social justice. The data collection and analysis, therefore, emphasized the educators' voices in exploring 1) how they defined social justice and selected the curriculum's content; 2) how they came to see a need for greater justice in society through their life experiences, 3) how they developed values attributing to a personal desire to take action in their classroom and community. The secondary claims around social justice that the study makes in its introduction, including the interrelatedness of theory and practice, the importance of

struggling with social concepts and "staying alive" to contradictions, and the necessity of educators for social justice being activists for social change, are heavily reinforced by Michael's and Darren's narratives and the analysis.

Michael identifies the need for social justice action in education through early experiences that pair community activism with schooling, tutoring, and challenging education policy. "I have this sort of life-long set of evidence that change happens on a grassroots level and change happens because of education" (Michael, interview 4/23/08). He comes to define social justice as being against the oppression of marginalized communities who suffer from the imbalance of how advantages and disadvantages are distributed in society. As an individual, Michael combats injustice by living in and participating in a community active around issues of racial and economic discrimination, and teaching students in a way that he hopes will empower them to assist their communities. Toward this end, Michael selects texts that emphasize overcoming the hegemony of capitalism and racism to imagine a different social order. Michael hopes that through his students (through their educational preparation), he will be instrumental in drastically changing society. "Looking back, it's clear to me that this was a path that goes all the way back to the beginning of my life. It's very exciting for me to have it be where it is right now. Like when I found out this school was founded after the community hunger strike I knew I had to try and get a job here" (Michael, interview 4/23/08). Michael's expression of the meaning of his participation in the school is reflective of the reverence he has for doing educational and community development work. Michael's commitment to acting with integrity, to staying accountable to students

in everyday life, and to living within the community are his individual strategies for achieving social justice both in and outside of school.

Darren links social justice to education through his own early struggles in school around "order" and "compliance". The dismissal of his voice and knowledge in the classroom repeatedly signified to him: "Hey, there's something wrong here." The misalignment between what he learned about history and society through self-directed study and what he was taught in school, and the social issues he saw perpetuated by systems of power (i.e. education, the economy, entertainment), compelled him to get involved in community activism through academia to tell "a different set of stories" in his practice and research. Critical consciousness and counter-storytelling is the focus of Darren's relationships with others and are the objectives he seeks in education. He sees his struggle as one against fear and complacency—his own and other people's. The antidote, he perceives, is an awareness of power and injustice that obliges action in all situations, and is the result of a proliferation of voices and ideas to explore and dissect. This awareness is Darren's perception of what critical consciousness consists. Darren chooses texts for the colloquium that emphasize an alternative view of history and that elevate the voices and ideas of people that are often suppressed. He uses these counter-narratives in the classroom to inspire students' own counter-storytelling activities. Darren hopes for "my students, the folks that I interact with", for them "to be able to make an *informed* decision", regardless of what faces them in life, and then "look at their work as part of this larger collective struggle to change their conditions, not their stuff individually, but who do they team up with?" Constant reflection upon one's relationship to the whole of society and upon one's participation in the achievement of justice for the

collective is Darren's personal strategy for achieving greater justice. Related to this strategy is Darren's focus on integrity and accountability—once one sees injustice, what will one do?

Ultimately the colloquium's curriculum design and content reflect heavily both Darren's and Michael's ideas and experiences. The project includes social research on the community and involvement in issues that are of importance to the community's welfare, and it also centers on the construction of counter-narratives through the use of media. The colloquium emphasizes action for social change in conjunction with the development of critical consciousness. "The idea of the colloquium is founded in the belief that our youth, and our students, are organic intellectuals. That they can understand their world philosophically. That they can theorize about their world." (Michael, interview 5/8/08). This idea unifies Michael's and Darren's perspectives on social justice—the belief that their students are brilliant, capable of producing philosophy, and poised to change society with some guidance to aid them. This belief in students' philosophical and intellectual capacities and in their right to change an unjust society is what motivates the colloquium design and it is what shapes Darren's and Michael's practice.

Defining what social justice *is* is individual as well as collective. It depends upon people's experiences of society and injustice. It also, in the case of social justice education, depends heavily upon experiences in school, college, and with knowledge more generally. It is impacted by how individuals and collectives perceive education's purpose. In short, social justice education is contextualized by the educational space, the persons working for social justice—both students and teachers— and the issues that they

jointly (or in contestation) define as tied to injustice and education. Moreover, because of the relationship between theory and practice (between action and reflection), identification of issues matters but so does the strategies employed for addressing those issues. The relationship between these two things informs one another in a complex manner (praxis).

This study dances around a fundamental question about what makes a social justice educator. What in their backgrounds motivates them to do what they do and alters how they see what they do? The narratives of Darren and Michael provide some clues and also illuminate the complexity inherent in trying to answer such a question. It is analogous to asking: How do people develop value systems? How do they identify the deepest problems within society? How do they come to care about others? How do they decide to what they will dedicate their lives? The questions are *huge*. However, their answers impact *who* is a social justice educator and *why* they educate for social justice. The hypothesis that this happens in a similar manner or contains exactly the same components across individuals is ridiculous. Michael and Darren, only two examples, demonstrate that different paths lead to participation in education for social justice. Undeniable is the fact that their experiences and motivations are significant to their curriculum and instruction. So, while such experiences and motivations should not be essentialized and cannot be generalized, their importance should also by no means be dismissed.

The implications of these conclusions are threefold. Social justice is "sexy right now" according to Darren, meaning it is used increasingly to describe programs, curriculum, pedagogy, etc., particularly those aimed at urban youth of color. But what

does it mean? What does it mean in these contexts, and what does it mean to the people using the term and consuming the term? If social justice approaches the complexity and depth of meaning that it has been ascribed throughout this study, the bar has been set high to demonstrate this through the educational content, and actions of people tied to its usage in schools and universities. So that the concept of social justice may not lose its contested and intricate meaning, or significance to marginalized or oppressed communities, the term should be applied with care and its users should expect the attention and criticality that comes with its usage. This is to say the scrutiny that should be paid it by individuals, who are invested in social change and education for equity.

Secondly, more attention should be given to what motivates teachers' in their desire to teach and in the creation of their course curriculum. The "false dichotomy" between education that is rigorous and education that is relevant is undermining sincere attempts at creating curriculum for social justice. Social justice education, as described by Darren and Michael, is not in competition with creating curriculum that is aligned to meaningful standards, builds content area capacity, or teaches college-level academic skills. Further research on the successful infusion of the dimensions of social justice education into core content area subjects should be undertaken to dispel such falsities that further perpetuate the lack of relevant and rigorous curriculum developed in urban schools. The scarcity of curriculum that both challenges and validates students of color, while supporting their achievement in a manner which will garner them access to the best post-secondary institutions and professions, maintains the inequitable outcomes produced by the United States education system.

Lastly, why is social justice education frequently only targeted at the youth and communities that are marginalized by systemic injustice? For society to change, all of its citizens need to have the multicultural skills and sociopolitical dispositions that foster tolerance, a commitment to equity, and an anti-racist worldview. This study has concluded that, from political philosophy to the Civil Rights Movement to social justice education, one can identify social justice with a general fairness in society. Fairness, that is tied to the consistent maintenance of various forms of equity—through the structure and practices of society's institutions and, simultaneously, through the embodied beliefs of justice by its people. It is, therefore, wrong to assume that only a portion of America's students stand to benefit from exploring issues of equity or fairness in the classroom. Further, it is naïve to assume that any lasting social change will occur when only a small portion of the population sees its necessity and participates in the struggle for its achievement.

The necessity of addressing issues of diversity in education responds to the "changing landscape of America's schools" and economic, political and cultural globalization, which means multicultural education is as important to white students' in their ability to participate in a democratic, inclusive and increasingly global society as it is for students of color (Banks, 2002, p. xi). Many classrooms in the United States demonstrate the continuing separate nature of public schooling where impoverished, urban and minority students are isolated into schools where upwards of ninety percent of the student population share the same racial identity and economic class status. There is a demonstrative parallel between segregated public places and social spaces, and segregated minds with the inability to understand "our shared human thread" (Hall, 2008,

p. 48). Consequently, social justice education is important to helping all students, regardless of their socioeconomic or racial identity, to understand and transcend social exclusion and political isolation. Social justice teachers believe that we cannot build a unified society—tolerant, equitable, or fair—with segregated minds. We cannot desegregate our minds and the minds of ours students without educating for social justice.

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Appendix A

Student-Teacher Relationship

The following are excerpts from an interview with Michael (5/8/08) that explore his ideas on student-teacher relationships. They are grouped under topical sub-headings. Michael emphasizes the qualities of consistency, respect, trust and high expectations as important.

Students' Impressions & Understanding of Michael

> I think students think I am kind of nuts which is good. […] It's a little different with each kid. If you were to like survey them, I think I tend to come off as kind of cold and calculating—sort of because I am. But I think when students get to know me, they realize there is a lot of empathy and solidarity with them—it's just not expressed in affectionate ways. It has more to do with my consistency and my generally laid back demeanor, especially outside of class. They come to understand that I'm on their side and that they trust me. I would say that there is quite a bit of trust. Like I said, I think they think I'm kind of nuts, like they joke about it all the time. Like there's this running joke with students that I have 16 cats and I sit around with them and watch Wheel of Fortune. Other students have a running joke that all I do is read books all the time, or sleep in this little room here [office at school]. But in a good way—I think they think I'm nuts for caring as much as I do is part of it. I think they think I'm nuts for being interested in things that they initially perceive to be boring as much as I do (Michael, 5/8/08).

Michael's Intentionality in Building Relationships with Students

R: When you're trying to establish relationships with students—are there things that you are trying to bring intentionally to the relationship? That you are trying to infuse in it? In that interaction? Is the "cold and calculating" demeanor – I mean, is that part of your intention?

M: Yeah, I mean—somewhat. I intend to be pretty serious all the time, but then again I just *am* pretty serious most of the time so I don't know if that's intentional or if that's just who I am. I intentionally want them to—the most important thing is that they trust my actions are in their best interest at all times. So whatever I do, it is to intentionally establish *that*. I very rarely miss a day of school. I never say I am going to be somewhere and then I'm not there. I try to never say I am going to do something and then not do it. It doesn't *always* happen but… So there's that—I think it all comes down to that. I think that's the most important thing in any teacher-student relationship. The *way* that manifests is going to depend on the personality of the teacher but I think that having students trust that your actions are always in their best interest is the most important thing. Our students have had experiences with adults, and experiences with adults in schools in particular, that not all adults are acting in their best interest. That not all adults are going to be consistent and trustworthy, and that not all adults have the expectations and respect for them that they deserve. So, it can be hard to build that trust and it can be very easy to lose it, largely because of their past experiences. But *that's* what I'm trying to do.

(Interview, 5/8/08).

Appendix B

Relevant Curriculum

The following are excerpts from an interview with Michael (5/8/08) that explore his ideas on relevant curriculum. They are grouped under topical sub-headings. Michael stresses knowing students and their world as the basis for being able to successfully teach students. He states that relevant curriculum is essential to his integrity as a teacher.

When Creating Lessons: Positioning Students as Experts and Teachers

> I have a chart somewhere that I could share with you! […] It's like a flow chart: either I start [when creating a lesson] with relevant popular culture, a social justice or injustice issue, or a really cool chemistry experiment. I'll start in one of those three places. And then try and mesh things together from that. […] I mean I think that you can have a good unit without any of the popular culture probably [by] appealing to students' internal sense of justice. I think they do have this internal sense of justice. I think kids have so much going on in their life though that sometimes a problem as unjust as it may be and as much as they should care—it's too distant. AND, sometimes you can easily get into this doom and gloom stuff—where everything's a problem and the whole world sucks and that's not what social justice education is. You should leave hopeful. And so I think that the popular culture helps in that, in that it's something that they are spending time with—and again it's this idea of legitimizing *their* world as worthy of study. It's legitimizing them as intellectuals where they can teach—that's something that they can undoubtedly teach me about, every time, right? Freire, and other people we read about, are always about this "learning from your student, learning from

your student". And people won't *see* what they can learn from their students because they're trying to learn chemistry from their students. It's been very rare—like I'll be honest. It's been very rare that a student has taught me chemistry. Not because they can't but just because I spend all my time thinking about this stuff for the last ten years and they haven't. But they've taught me a lot of other things. So it's those other things that you have to look at them to teach you—mostly about their world because it's only in knowing about their world that you can teach them (Michael, 5/8/08).

Student Engagement & Hard Work: Focus on Community and Students' Reality

The key is that they [students] are studying their community and their reality and they care about the opinions of the people they are interviewing and if we were studying some other thing—I couldn't [engage them in the tedious aspects of social research] […] And they know and they have an opinion on all those questions themselves and they came up with the questions and so that's one of the reasons it's so important for students to study their own reality. It's why relevant curriculum is one of the *most* important things in urban education because if you don't have that you can't push students to engage in tedious or difficult work in the same way (Michael, 5/8/08).

Relevant Curriculum & Teacher Integrity

I can't do it [teach irrelevant curriculum] because it violates my own sense of integrity. If the stuff is irrelevant, like I'm going to have a hard time pushing a kid really hard. Because, deep down, I know it's irrelevant. So, my own integrity

is kept intact by teaching students relevant things because then I am not going to hesitate to tell the kid this is important for you to do (Michael, 5/8/08).

Authentic Outcomes: Not Resorting to Trite Explanations

R: You don't find yourself resorting to explanations every once in awhile that are like "because the [education] system tells you, you have to know this and this is part of my job".

M: I used to resort to those explanations here and there. I don't find myself doing it as much anymore because I have gotten better at integrating all those things together. I've gotten better at teaching them the skills that the system wants them to know in a context that is more intrinsically motivated. Like you definitely won't hear us saying that kind of stuff in the colloquium, right? Like, I don't think I would. Like, I don't think I would say like "we're coding [interviews] because at some point in graduate school you are going to have to learn how to code". Like, "we're trying to make a good video to tell our story and it's going to be better if we organize our thoughts in this way." So that sort of authentic outcome helps avoid those types of explanations (Interview, 5/8/08).

Creating a curriculum of connections: the local to the global

I'll come back to this idea, to grounding the curriculum in the lives of the students. Our environmental science curriculum was built around environmental justice issues in our community. So if we start there than we can build up to these bigger ideas. If we start with the coal power plant that's nearby the school, and the ridiculous rates of asthma in our communities then we can build up to global

warming and the problems it causes around the world. So one thing is to start very locally, sometimes even individually and then build out to a global understanding of things. I mean so this is why I build my own curriculum (Interview 5/8/08).

Appendix C

Goal-Oriented Discipline

The following are excerpts from an interview with Michael (5/8/08) that explore his ideas on school and academic discipline. They are grouped under topical sub-headings. Michael suggests that discipline in a classroom and school should be goal-oriented, and directly tied to the discipline students need to succeed academically, and be a shared responsibility.

Distinguishing between Discipline and Punishment

> One of the things that we always try and talk with students about and make very clear—I hope at this school as a whole—is to distinguish between discipline and punishment. And so for me, discipline is making the choices that need to be made to reach your goals, right? So doing the things that get you where you want to go. Punishment is consequences imposed by someone with power on someone without power. And so, I try to avoid punishment wherever possible. I try to handle all discipline matters by myself. I don't write kids up; I don't send kids to the office; I don't generally send kids out of class. Maybe step outside for a break; step outside so we can have a conversation but not leave class (Michael, 5/8/08).

Discipline & Curriculum: Perseverance through difficult work to reach goals

> People say that the key to discipline is an engaging curriculum, right? That's what I was always taught in my teacher ed [education] classes. "If your curriculum's engaging enough than you won't have discipline problems." It's true that if you have a boring-ass curriculum, you're going to have more

discipline problems. But it's true that there is hard work that needs to be done in schools that requires more discipline than just interest. Like a lot of my discipline techniques come from coaching basketball. People think "oh coaching is easy to get kids involved in, or coaches' work isn't hard or whatever because kids want to play basketball". Well, yeah, kids want to play basketball, but they don't want to run their sprints; they don't necessarily want to lift weights; they don't want to do a drill that's kind of boring or, they don't necessarily want to do all those things that it takes to reach their goal, right? They want to play basketball. So they just want to be in the gym playing all the time and that's not what basketball practice is. And so, discipline is making the decision to do those things that are going to get you to your goal, right? And so, there are times that you have to be a hard ass because you have to push kids through things that they don't want to do. And I think that's true in the classroom too. Your lesson could be very engaging but writing is difficult for a kid who didn't learn how to write as a young child, or English is their second language, or who doesn't have faith that they can be an intellectual and a writer and a producer of text (Michael, 5/8/08).

Shared Responsibility: Discipline through teacher modeling, peer accountability & identified common purpose

M: And so, that lesson can be very interesting but sometimes it's going to be very hard to push a kid through that writing piece, through that calculation that they're going to have to do in chemistry, through a reading that they are struggling with—they're tired at the end of the day, and there is still more work to be done. That requires discipline. So that comes from me through modeling—I

try to be very disciplined myself. It comes through kids holding each other accountable, and it comes through having this larger purpose. Right? Like there's a reason that we are doing all of this. We see that there's a lot of problems in our community, and in our lives and in the world—and our purpose is to make that better collectively. And that's why we have to have discipline because that's our goal—to make our own life better, to make our community better, to make the world a better place and so discipline comes from that. It doesn't come from because you're in school; it doesn't come from you need good grades. It doesn't even come from you need to go to college. It comes from we're trying to make our lives, our community and the world better! And doing that requires this hard work! And this hard work requires these habits. And it requires the exclusion of these other habits also (Michael, 5/8/08).