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The Purpose of Education: A Case Study on Accountability and Latina Teachers in a Midwest Charter Network

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THE PURPOSE OF EDUCATION: A CASE STUDY ON ACCOUNTABILITY AND LATINA TEACHERS IN A MIDWEST CHARTER NETWORK

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CERTIFICATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I certify that I am the sole author of this dissertation. Any assistance received in the preparation of this dissertation has been acknowledged and disclosed within it. Any sources utilized, including the use of data, ideas, and words, those quoted directly or paraphrased, have been cited. I certify that I have prepared this dissertation according to program guidelines, as directed.

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May 14, 2020
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ABSTRACT

The struggle to provide all children with an equitable education remains one of the most concerning and significant social, political, and moral problems in our nation. Although neoliberal accountability reform efforts have been set in place to alleviate such gaps, inequalities persist and disproportionately affect historically marginalized groups. This dissertation in curriculum studies aims to understand the perspectives of Latina teachers, an underrepresented group both in teaching and in educational research, on the effects of neoliberal accountability measures.

This qualitative, multisite instrumental case study was guided by the following research questions: 1) When thinking about education under the effects of neoliberal politics, how do Latina teachers who work in a charter school conceive the purpose of education? 2) How do these teachers describe their experiences teaching in a charter school in the context of neoliberal accountability politics? 3) How is their identity implicated in the teaching process? and 4) Do these teachers subscribe to educational philosophies resonant with those of John Dewey and Tsunesaburo Makiguchi? To answer these questions, six Latina teachers were interviewed regarding their experiences within the Midwest Charter Network.

Teachers' responses and public documents were analyzed using critical theory, Dewey's Democratic Education, and Makiguchi's Value-Creating Education as theoretical lens. Five main themes emerged: 1) personal identity shaped aspects of these teachers' philosophies of education, curricula, and pedagogy, 2) teachers share common epistemologies resonant with the educational philosophies of Dewey and Makiguchi using social inequalities as a lens, 3) teachers have positive experiences working within their schools, 4) however, also experience personal

conflict with neoliberal accountability measures, and 5) the student-teacher relationship is critical in the growth and learning process.

This research has theoretical and practical significance. These findings challenge the neoliberal discourse surrounding teacher roles by recognizing the complex ways identity, beliefs, and context shape these six teachers' teaching experience. This study finds that these teachers do not just see their role as presenting a curriculum, but as intellectual practitioners charged with and committed to improving the lives of students. While these teachers understand the expectations of accountability, they practice agency and negotiate their own autonomy to provide a democratic and value-creating environment for their students. These teachers are not subordinate to neoliberal understanding of education but are able to re-imagine education's potential in the lives of students to resist these notions and actively work against them.

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Acknowledgements

I want to first thank my dissertation committee, Dr. Jason Goulah, Dr. Gonzalo Obelleiro, Dr. William Ayers. In my orientation for the doctoral program, a professor asked me to consider what the program means to me, what it means to be a scholar in the field of education, and what contributions will I be making to the field of curriculum studies. Jay, the way you lead your life is an example of the course I hope to one day follow within my scholarly endeavors. I walk away from every single conversation with you changed; a better person. Thank you for your mentorship throughout this process, for listening to me, valuing my half-baked ideas, pushing me to explore further what those ideas mean for me personally, and how they too may become critical contributions for educators like me. You've included me in a new and developing body of scholarship within the *Soka Heritage* that was once foreign to me, you've allowed me to speak freely, and develop my own path within that. Thank you! Thank you!

Gonzalo, in the introduction of this dissertation, I talk of my coming to theory. Your class was my first introduction to the *Soka Heritage*. In my initial classes with you, I was in my infancy within this scholarship. I grappled with ideas of value-creation, the meaning of happiness within education, and in simply reading and engaging educational theory and philosophy. You developed a safe space for me to grow. This program has changed my life - both personally and professionally. I grew. Your classes contributed to that greatly! Thank you!

Dr. Ayers, your work in social justice, your activism, and struggle alongside those most in need of a voice is inspiring. In you, I see love - for all humanity. Before our class started you sent out your syllabus. In reading it, I immediately saw the possibility of what education could be. You encouraged us to write, to share out, to listen to others, and you were never afraid of the personal narrative that shaped our understanding of discussions, learning, and growth. Each

class you demonstrated how each of us was invaluable, sacred, and fully worthy of respect and attention. Thank you for opening up your home and heart to me!

I want to thank the women who participated in this research. Interviewing as a methodology meant I simply had to just listen to the voices, meanings, truths, experiences, and ideas, about a world so familiar – education. The voices of these women were intriguing and powerful. All of them thought critically and deeply about their practice, the students and lives they impacted daily, and the moment to moment decisions they make that implicate not just their experience in the classroom, but the young lives they touch and influence. Their voices were filled with concern, sadness, urgency, happiness, excitement, confidence, hope and most of all love for the profession they've chosen. I walked away from each interview changed, with a renewed energy for teaching and a new lens by which to see my experiences. Most of all, listening to these women reminded me of how truly noble the work of teachers is.

I would like to thank my critical thought partners, Dr. Ravi Shah and Jeannette Cooper, who walked alongside me throughout the doctoral program, held me accountable, read my work, met with me, shared common struggles, offered ideas, and helped me to make it through to the end.

Lastly, I would like to thank my parents. Education and hard work were always an expectation in our household. Throughout my life, my mother often said, "education is something that no one can take away from you, something you'll have for the rest of your life." This wasn't just an expectation placed upon the next generation in hopes that we'd be the ones to improve a family legacy. As a 5-year-old, I attended my father's PhD party from the University of Chicago, and saw my mother struggle to work a full-time job and get her bachelor's degree and then MBA from the University of Illinois. They served as role models, practiced what they

preached, and our family was all the better for it. Thank you for your sacrifices! Because of what you were willing to give up, your children were able to have and do. I will forever be grateful!

Dedication

To my mother, Irma G. Cruz, my father, Wilfredo Cruz Sr., and my brothers, Wilfredo Jr. and Daniel Cruz. Your influence in my life has been profound.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

For many, education is seen as a gateway for opportunities, a pathway toward upward social mobility; a place where one acquires the skills, experiences, and knowledge needed to obtain good jobs and a prosperous future (Gamoran, 2015; Monkman, Ronald, & Theramene, 2005). This notion, that education can lead toward upward social mobility – through hard work, or the American Dream, has been cultivated in our everyday lives, and the role of schooling has become a critical mainstay in achieving and maintaining that ideal. However, the reality of attaining "the American Dream" is grim for many, particularly the economically disadvantaged.

The academic achievement gap is a measure used to characterize the separation of economically disadvantaged students from their more advantaged peers. This gap has existed since the beginning of our nation itself, and has been the focus of discussion, research, and controversy in educational discourse (Hunter & Bartee, 2003). Today, the struggle to provide all children with an equitable education remains one of the most concerning and significant social, political, and moral problems in the United States (Rodriguez, 2013; Wixom, 2015). Although policies have been set in place to alleviate such gaps, for example those found under accountability reform efforts, inequalities persist and disproportionately and negatively affect historically marginalized groups, particularly students of color.

This dissertation in curriculum studies aims to understand the perspectives of Latino teachers, an underrepresented group both in teaching and in educational research, on the effects of accountability measures, including high-stakes testing, within the Midwest Charter Network. These underrepresented perspectives are used to examine how teachers replicate, acquiesce to, disrupt, challenge, and/or upset the inequalities found in education today.

Teacher identity is at the heart of this study as personal and professional subjectivities are implicated in the process of teaching. Critical theorists have shown that accountability measures help to replicate the inequalities seen in education and in the broader society. Inequalities particularly affect underserved Latino and African American students. Olsen (2008) used identity as an analytical tool to understand how prior events and experiences influenced reasons for entry into the teaching profession. One theme that arose was a desire to improve the lives of students and the world. Teachers saw their profession as a form of social justice work, whereby educators were in a position to positively change the lives of those they taught. An assumption of this study is that the purpose of education aligns in some respect to this notion of social justice. However, if Latino teachers are entrenched in the current landscape of accountability measures, then how do they understand their own practice? Are these teachers contributing to the very inequalities they seek to challenge? Or, are these teachers finding ways to work within the current state of education to transform it? Olsen (2008) found that teachers struggled to reconcile identity conflicts between their "long-held expectations" of teaching with "current teaching realities" and to "merge their personal self-understanding with their developing professional identities" (p. 37). Is this still the case? He also asserts that "a teacher is always collapsing the past, present, and future into a complex mélange of professional beliefs, goals, memories, and predictions while enacting practice" (Olsen, 2008, p. 24). Giroux (1997) "rejects the notion of pedagogy as a technique or set of neutral skills and argues that pedagogy is a cultural practice that can be understood only through considerations of history, politics, power, and culture" (p. 233). How then, is the identity of teachers implicated in today's education?

Within 5 days of Donald Trump's inauguration into the Presidency, he signed executive orders to bolster deportation forces and begin the construction of a wall along the Mexican

border. That same day, January 25, 2017, he also signed executive orders directing the Department of Justice and Homeland Security to withhold federal funds from sanctuary cities, which do not contact federal officials regarding deportation of undocumented arrestees. Chicago is a sanctuary city. On February 18, 2017, a leaked memo from the White House indicated a potential effort to use military force for the removal of undocumented immigrants, the majority of which were Mexican. In September 2017, Trump terminated the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) which put 20,000 Latino teachers at risk of deportation (Center for American Progress, 2018). In October 2018, the Trump administration planned to send over 5,000 troops to the Mexican border to prevent a surge of Central American immigrants from entering into the United States. While other groups have been the target of the Trump administration, his Presidency has been riddled with anti-immigrant, anti-Hispanic, and racist sentiment.

Policies are a reflection of societal values, interests, and relations of power (Lipman, 2011). They provide insight into the current political climate, which has become more grave for Latinos under the current administration. Today, Latinos are the largest minority population in the United States (Shapiro & Partelow, 2018). In 2017, Latinos became the largest minority population in American schools, making up one-quarter of primary and secondary students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018, & Shapiro & Partelow, 2018). In 2015-2016, 80% of teachers were White, 9% Hispanic, 7% were Black, 2% were Asian and the remainder were American Indian or Alaska Native. The gap between students and teachers of the same race or ethnicity in the U.S. is greatest for Latinos (Shapiro & Partelow, 2018). The Anglo world of schools also means that Latino teachers are in a profession almost devoid of Latinos who share common cultural characteristics. While this research is indicative of a concern within education,

it also reflects a greater concern for our country. An investment in Latino students and teachers is beneficial for the nation as a whole.

In this study, critical theory is used to shed light on accountability reform efforts. A critical analysis offers a way to observe how unequal power is reproduced, maintained, and challenged within society. Through this critical examination, issues of inequalities as they relate to power structures within class, race, and ethnicity become apparent, specifically as they work through schools, teachers, the curriculum, and pedagogy. Critical theorists have found that these reform efforts undermine the ideals of a democratic society, reshape the purpose of education, and contribute to societal inequalities. The democratic educational philosophy of John Dewey (Western philosophy) and value-creating pedagogy of Tsunesaburo Makiguchi (Eastern philosophy) are used as means to evaluate how teachers understand and reconcile accountability efforts within their own practice, as well as ways to offer an alternative framework for rethinking the purpose of education. Given prior theoretical and empirical research, this study assumes that the presence of the teaching perspectives and practices of Dewey and Makiguchi are limited in U.S. schools and particularly within the context of the Midwest Charter Network, given the pressures and constraints of accountability measures.

Positionality

The impetus for this research stems from my personal experiences as a high school teacher within the Midwest Charter Network (pseudonym). As a teacher, I taught for six years in two different schools within the network (the first for 4 years and the second for 2 years). While there, I believed in the philosophy of the school and its promise of upward social mobility for minority students. I wanted to work with students who looked like me, who had the same background as I did, who I understood, and who understood me. I wanted to make a difference in

the community which represented my heritage, ethnic background, and culture. In this section, I provide my positioning as a researcher in this study as a way to illustrate the ways in which my gender, race, class, and other aspects of my identity are deeply entangled in this research. I begin with a text message conversation (Figure 1) that took place between myself and a previous student I taught during the 2013 – 2014 school year within the Midwest Charter Network.

I left the network in 2015, but [Christian] and I kept in touch. This text message took place on September 21, 2016, only a few weeks after beginning his first semester at Georgetown University. For many reasons, I have often thought about this conversation and use it here because I believe this conversation demonstrates the complexity of teaching. [Christian] and I had a great relationship. He was in my Advanced Placement World History class during his sophomore year in high school and was one of the students who went above and beyond to pass the test at the end of the year. Passing the test meant as a sophomore in high school he would gain college credit. Passing the test also opened up opportunities for college acceptance, scholarships, and was in essence money in the bank as these credits would count

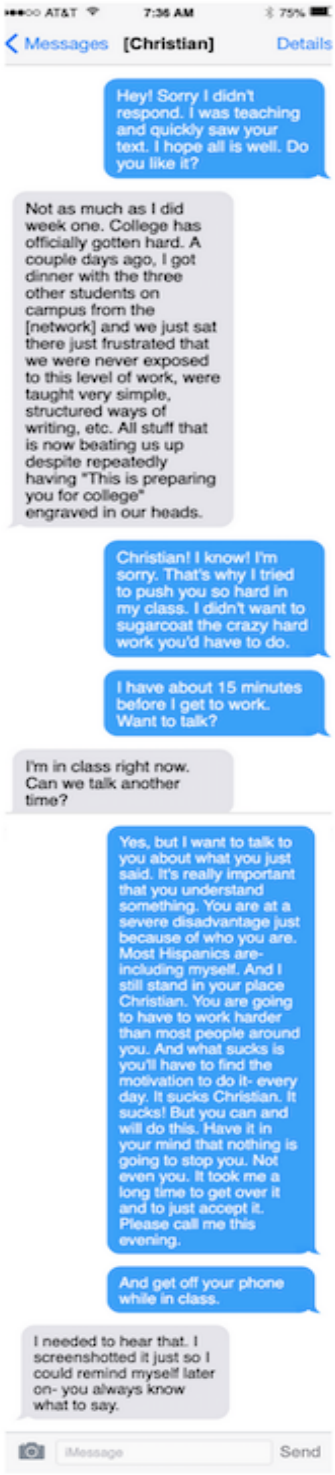

Figure 1: Text Message Thread Between [Christian] and Me

toward already taken courses in universities within the United States. I often reminded his class of this. Christian and a group of friends took that seriously, often staying with me during my office hours to study, practice writing timed essays, to quiz each other on historical facts and dates, and to get help on homework. Six of the twenty-eight students in that class passed the test and Christian was one of them. He was undoubtedly one of the hardest working students I have ever met.

His dedication and work ethic got him a full scholarship to Georgetown University. As you read his texts however, you find that less than a month into college he begins to struggle. He expresses frustration at the level of work, his inability to write in complex ways, and the belief that he thought he was ready for this experience. I often think back to the way in which I responded to him and why. Rather than giving him an answer probably considered more appropriate for a teacher, such as seek out your professors for help during office hours, attend the university's writing lab, make sure your trying to manage your time better, and a host of other advice considered "normal" teacher responses, I immediately respond by talking about race and ethnicity, the struggles he will face because of it, and I talked about myself. My response to Christian came from my personal experiences, both past and present.

I was in my third quarter of my doctorate program at the time. As I explain further in the following section, I began to slowly understand not just my teaching experience, but my life experiences in light of my readings and different theoretical lens. The doctorate program gave

me a new found critically that helped to connect for me the ways in which my own identity was implicated in my experiences in education as both student and teacher. This new found critically influenced the way I responded to Christian. I provided a response outside the conventional professionally scripted role of a teacher and spoke about the ways in which our identities have, are, and will shape our experience of education in difficult ways than that of others.

Christian responded by saying he "needed to hear that." He did not call me back that evening, and while a part of me felt a little embarrassed for my response without a great deal of context, I also felt frustrated, angry, and saddened by listening to his struggle, and I knew these struggles were not simply about his academic inabilities. Christian was a great student, an amazing student. He was struggling with the same things I struggled with and these were difficult for him to name. Transitioning into college is difficult, but Christian was also experiencing a culture not his own, something my class or our interactions could never teach him.

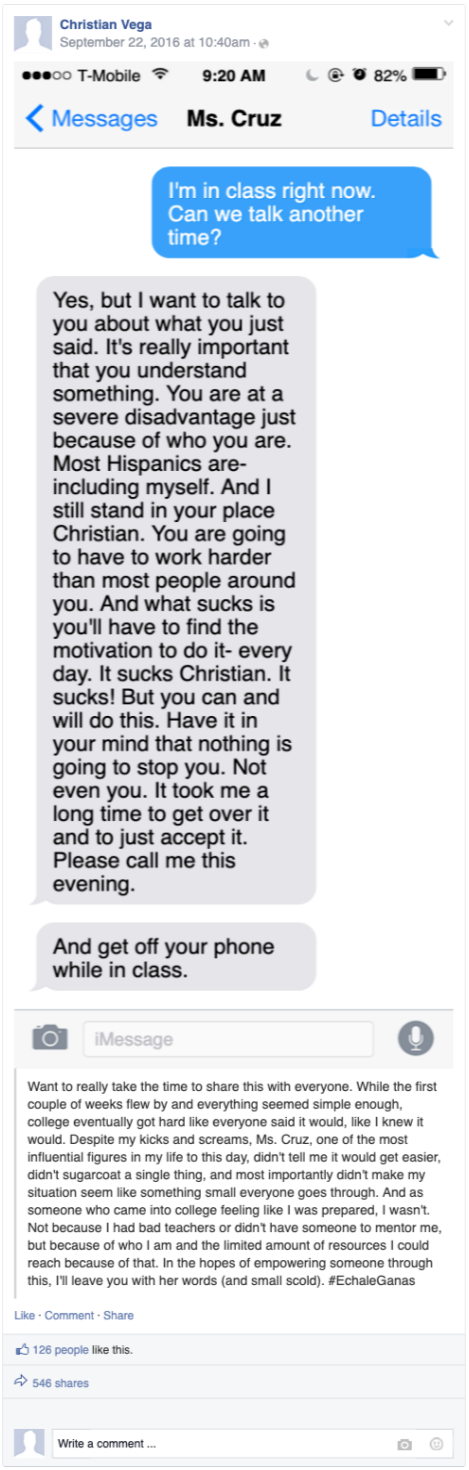

Figure 2: Facebook Post by Christian

Two days after our texts, a previous colleague of mine forwarded me a screenshot of the text message I sent to Christian. He posted it on Facebook (Figure 2) with a message that read,

> *Want to really take the time to share this with everyone. While the first couple of weeks flew by and everything seemed simple enough, college eventually got hard like everyone said it would, like I knew it would. Despite my kicks and screams, Mr. Cruz, one of the most influential figures in my life to this day, didn't tell me it would get easier, didn't sugarcoat a single thing, and most importantly did not make my situation seem like something small everyone goes through. And as someone who came into college feeling like I was prepared, I wasn't. Not because I had bad teachers or didn't have someone to mentor me, but because of who I am and the limited amount of resources I could reach because of that. In the hopes of empowering someone through this, I'll leave you with her words (and small scold). #EchaleGanas*

I did not realize the impact my words had on Christian, nor that I had the kind of influence on his life the way he described. At the end of his comment he uses the hashtag #EchaleGanas. This is a Spanish phrase used in Mexico that can be translated into "do it with feeling," 'give it your all," or "work hard." My words were encouraging and empowering for him and spoke to his identity and academic struggle.

Identity and the ways in which it shaped our experiences in education was at the core of that conversation. My ethnicity as a Mexican and Puerto Rican American is part of my identity, is fundamental to who I am, and one of the reasons for my entry into the teaching profession. This is important to me as it shaped my life experiences. It should be said, that I did not exactly have the same background as my students. While I consider myself Latina, I grew up in the middle class. This is particularly important to mention as it is not the typical experience of most

Latino families in the United States who tend to occupy the working and lower classes. Being Latina and growing up in the middle class came with a sense of duty and responsibility; an unspoken expectation. My entry, as a fourth grader, into the middle class meant I was a part of two communities – one based on class which allotted me economic privilege and the other tied deeply to my ethnic and racial background as a Latina.

While growing up in an all-White neighborhood and attending an all-White elementary school, I experienced personal tensions of belonging, identity formation, and understanding where I fit. What I solidly learned though, was that my economic privilege meant I had a moral responsibility to give back to those in my community who did not possess the same privileges I experienced. Attending an all-girl Catholic high school where the student majority was Latina, and a university that also serves a great deal of Latino students solidified the community in which I wanted to serve—low-income Latinos. The way I chose to "give back" is through teaching in secondary education. I saw teaching as a form of social justice work in which I could make a difference in the lives of my students.

While in my master's program, I observed teachers in several different high schools. After graduating, I decided I would apply to one of the schools I observed within the Midwest Charter Network that served mostly Latino students. In many ways it resembled the high school I attended. I was impressed with the environment, student body, and school philosophy, which provides low-income students with the skills necessary to lead exemplary (Midwest Charter Network, 2020).

Although I was a licensed social studies teacher, I got my foot in the door as a paraprofessional. I applied for the social studies positions available, but it was not until my third year that I was afforded a part-time opportunity. Among the difficulties of becoming a first-year

teacher, however, I was told I would be responsible for teaching the reading College Readiness Standards through the content of World History. Standards were not a new thing for me, but what was new and difficult was my newfound responsibility of teaching a subject, reading, that I was not qualified or prepared to teach. With each passing year, I became adept at conforming to the ever-changing expectations of the high-stakes testing atmosphere. My success in teaching reading was, however, much harder to assess as my students' scores varied each year, showing extreme growth some years and minimal growth other years.

Within the six years of my time in the network, the culture of accountability aggressively changed. With each passing year, structures were set in place to make accountability at every level visible and as efficient as possible. The network used the standardized tests to measure student growth: Explore for freshmen, PLAN for sophomores, and the ACT for juniors. In my last year, I taught sophomores. Every sophomore, including English Language Learners and Special Education students took a PLAN pre-test, three interim tests, and a post-test. These tests took place quarterly and were given on a Friday; in total most students typically took up to fifteen high-stakes tests throughout their high school experience. Once the test was taken, administrators would come around and pick up all the scantrons for electronic processing. Students would leave school at 12:00pm, and for the next four hours teachers were expected to analyze "their" results, and their student performance outcomes.

Statistical analysis could easily measure a number of phenomena and as my time in the network increased so too did my ability to interpret student achievement. My elaborate spreadsheets tracked students' individual reading scores and "told" me how much students grew, stayed the same, or regressed in their learning as a direct result of my teaching, all with fancy colors that represented trends, aggregates, and projections. These spreadsheets had individual

student averages, class averages, made comparisons to other class averages, comparisons to prior year averages, and made projections of post-PLAN scores and future ACT Scores. Students were expected to know their latest scores in my class. Therefore, on the following Monday, I would project this spreadsheet of individual and class scores in class. Growth or lack of it on tests was made transparent and public to students in multiple ways, including a year-round poster reminder that hung up on my wall providing the scores for each class and their progress.

Analysis of student achievement was not just expected by me, the teacher, students too needed to provide reflection and set standards goals. Each student was expected to read the test to look at their incorrect answers and provide explanations for their thought process. Along with the data of my students and particular classes, the results would be published for the network showing where my particular results fell in comparison to all the schools in the network. Because the four hours given on that Friday was not nearly enough time to analyze data in complex quantitative and qualitative ways, I had to spend that weekend thinking about and documenting ways I would need to reteach what students got wrong, reflect on what I did not do throughout the course of the quarter to ensure students were "learning," and how I would explain, or account, for classes that did not show growth, or even worse, showed a regression in their learning. My teaching in essence was data-driven, and I would be accounting for it.

These tests had many consequences, not just for me, but also for my students. With each analysis of results my curriculum shifted away from student interests, desires, abilities, knowledge, or understanding, and more toward a curriculum that helped to improve future test scores. Rewards and sanctions were put in place, not just by the school, but outside factors that had both immediate and long-term consequences. Those students who needed extra help were expected to stay for extra tutoring after school via ACT classes because their scores could

potentially affect their college admission. For teachers, a bonus structure was set in place to motivate getting higher scores. Because charter schools have a yearly contract, those teachers who did not show high levels of growth always feared for their jobs. These tests were meant to guide my instruction, but stripped me of my autonomy as a teacher, insisted on continuous self-improvement, and were used as a form of teacher evaluation (Taubman, 2009).

With each test and interim, I understood that numbers did not give the full picture of what was happening in my classroom, but more and more they became the measure of my professional success. Those numbers did not show that five of the twenty-nine students in a given class read at a fourth grade level, that seven students had special needs, one was living in a shelter with his mother for the past three months, another was living with her aunt who just lost her job, another was dealing with a death in the family, and another was responsible for watching his siblings every evening. Low scores did not account for the lack of instructional minutes given to a specific teacher or subject area, or the geographic location of the school and its correlation to the demographics of students served. Higher scores did not account for the fact that some schools within the network required teachers to stay until as late as 7:00pm tutoring students who struggled in specific subject areas, that some classes simply came in testing at much higher scores than others, or that some schools had more resources than others. The numbers gave the impression of objectivity and presented themselves as transparent and measurable to what was happening in the classroom (Taubman, 2009). The system of accountability appeared more efficient because it was meant to help students get into college, get more funding for scholarships, close the achievement gap, and increase academic success.

National-Louis University, the place of my teacher education, was accredited by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, both shaped by accountability. What I

learned in that program allowed me to make a seamless transition into my role as a teacher within the era of accountability (Taubman, 2009). Taking and passing the Illinois Licensure Testing System, also itself a product of the accountability transformation, "meant" I was eligible and qualified to teach. I was able to immediately implement the pedagogical practices of the corporate method into my role as teacher. I did not question the methods or pedagogy taught throughout the program. I easily and enthusiastically adopted the language, concepts, and practices of accountability without questioning their origins. I did not understand the conservative social agendas, neoliberal economic policies, and the influence of the learning sciences on education. This process made it easy to comply with the changes of accountability (Bower & Thomas, 2013).

Why did I unknowingly accept this movement? Aside from my own education that allowed for this transition, the discourse of standards and accountability was particularly hegemonic in the charter system I worked for because they themselves were a product of these reforms. In an unpublished training manual for the Midwest Charter Network (2014), a then principal of one of the campuses wrote the following paraphrased message to staff members which provides an example of the discourse within the network around accountability: Being amazing:… Our goal is to be amazing. We are extremely dedicated, hardworking, intelligent, driven, and care deeply about our mission. The students we serve deserve it. As a network we have a unique opportunity to do the impossible. Currently, there are roughly 8,000 low-income urban students in our classes. Our mission for them is college graduation. In 2013, we had a 100% college acceptance rate to four-year universities. 90% of them enrolled with a projected 45 to 50% college graduation rate. The class of 2013 grew 6 points on ACT tests within 3 years. We

continue to rank in the top 5 in our city. Our school culture and workplace are ranked one of the highest according to local public schools and research findings. Families are choosing us!

This year, we had over 7,400 applications, which is an indicator of job security. Our school disciplinary culture focuses on empowering students, keeping them safe, and getting results. We are innovators and, in a position, to be an example of what America's urban education could be. We need to continue working and looking for what works to ensure that our college graduation rate continues to increase. Today, the highest college graduation for those in the lowest income quartile within the United States is 10%. The average for all of students in the U.S. is 30%. We are doing a great job comparatively, but this means half of our students are predicted to achieve our goal. 80% of those in the highest quartile graduate from four-year universities. This is what we aim to achieve. We need to work harder by increasing our students' profile, so they are accepted into universities with the highest graduation rates. To do this, our students need rigorous classes, and higher GPAs and ACT scores.

An entire dissertation could be dedicated to analyzing this short excerpt, from the hegemonic belief that college graduation is a true measure of educational achievement, to the use of data to make national to local comparisons, from the use of the word mission as constructing the purpose of education, to the belief that teachers' hard work has the ability to close the gap between the most impoverished and the wealthiest communities in the United States. This message exemplifies the pervasiveness of accountability within the network and a normalization process that occurred whereby I was led into a false consciousness defined by a broader belief system (Vinson, 2001). I internalized the rhetoric and discourse as it became the sole focus of schooling. I allowed it to shape my curriculum and teaching practices. My role as a thoughtful practitioner, the reason why I went into teaching to begin with, was dramatically changed.

Taubman (2009) articulated this as a "direct assault on the intellectual, aesthetic, and ethical life of teachers, and its radical misunderstanding of teaching" (p. 5). Accountability significantly impoverished my intellectual life as a teacher. There was a clash between the personal, professional, and the scholarly. Compliance was forced by the rewards and sanctions and any resistance became futile. By the end of my 6th year, I felt completely defeated. I decided I was not a great teacher and I was doing a disservice to students. Teaching changed, I changed. I lost my identity and found it difficult to articulate how intuitively wrong my existence as a teacher felt. Over a tearful dinner at Olive Garden with my mother, I decided I would consider a career in nursing. After leaving the Midwest Charter Network, I decided to give education one more year and began interviewing at other schools. In one interview, a principal asked me what my ideal classroom looked like. I do not recall my answer, but what I do recall is understanding that I had lost my ability to articulate what I believed the purpose of education should be, what an ideal classroom looked like, and what my role was as a teacher.

Five years later, I am the Chair of the Social Studies Department and teach various subjects within secondary education including psychology, sociology, political science, and history. I currently serve wealthy middle- and upper-class students with learning differences. This transition into my current school helped me to understand my experience. I decided to enter a doctorate program in curriculum studies to explore and understand this experience. My experience both illustrates the potential and the difficulty of teaching. It illustrates how neoliberal ideologies are not just out there, but are embodied in our everyday choices, actions, beliefs, and our very consciousness. It also illustrates how teaching is political and hegemony was actualized in my everyday practices.

Coming to Theory

In *Coming to Theory: Finding Foucault and Deleuze* (2001), Elizabeth Adams St. Pierre describes her interest in answering Judith Butler's question "[H]ow is it that we become available to a transformation of who we are, a contestation which compels us to rethink, a reconfiguration of our 'place' and our 'ground'?... Or, conversely, how is it we find ourselves *unavailable* to transformation by theory?" (p. 141). I have labeled this section after St. Pierre's article which inspired in me great reflection in the theoretical and conceptual frameworks I use throughout this research.

In starting the doctoral program at DePaul University, one of my first readings was a dense chapter by Japanese educator Tsunesaburo Makiguchi called *The Fundamentals of Value* (Bethel, 1989). An edited translation of one chapter from the first book of Makiguchi's four-volume work called *The System of Value-Creating Pedagogy*, it describes Makiguchi's concept of value creation and its relationship to education. In reading this chapter, value creation was unintelligible to me. It was not so much Bethel's translation—though there are documented problems with it (see Goulah & Gebert, 2009; Inukai, 2013)—that did not allow me to fully engage with these powerful epistemological understandings of education, but rather I was *unavailable* to the possibility of transformation by Makiguchi's ideas. As I grappled with his foreign ideas, both as simply different from my in-classroom experiences and as an Eastern philosophy of education, I pushed away their possibilities. The reality is that value creation seemed separate from the current conditions of education and divorced from the immediacies of practice (Levinson, 2011). When reintroduced to Makiguchi and his ideas in later courses, I came to see their worth and relevance. I address Makiguchi's ideas in more detail later in this dissertation.

In the course of my doctoral program, I was also introduced to critical theory. This is not surprising, as critical theory has come to dominate teacher education, curriculum theorizing, and educational research. Critical theory offers one the ability to understand societal forms of domination. It is not a theory that simply seeks to understand the current situation, through the analysis and critique of conflict, power and systems of oppression that lead to societal inequalities, but also encourages activism and aims to improve the human condition through change (Crotty, 2015; Levinson, 2011). Critical theory provided me with the language to articulate, analyze, critique, question, and understand my experience as a teacher in a charter school where I spent my first 6 years. In reading works from Karl Marx, Antonio Gramsci, Pierre Bourdieu, Michel Foucault, Jurgen Habermas, Paulo Freire and others, I developed an understanding of the current state of education. This "awakening" or "consciousness" gave me a sense of liberation, emancipation, and validated my personal experience in education. I, unfortunately, also went through stages of considerable grieving, anger, sadness, helplessness, and urgency. In this study, I draw heavily from critical discourses, such as critical theory, feminist theory, neo-Marxism, and the overall perception that American education remains unjust (Vinson, 2001).

Critical theory helped to identify and articulate my struggles within education, and I imagine the struggles of many other teachers like me. It allowed me to engage in contestations and rethink and reconfigure my 'place' and 'ground.' It brought me to new ways of understanding social justice and to profound reflection in my own false consciousness, but practical action for change alluded me. *This* finding the "means of liberation" is one major critique or disadvantage of critical theory (Levinson, 2011, p. 12). Answers to everyday teaching practices toward emancipation and freedom within this framework are vague. Ultimately, I

realized I needed to move beyond critique. This came through rediscovery of Makiguchi, this time, assigned together with the ideas of John Dewey.

Prior to my engagement with critical theory, I was *unavailable* to the works of Makiguchi and Dewey, but in my rediscovery, I now found that their epistemologies offered what critical theory did not, *hope*. They offer something deeper for education and society as a whole. Critical theory allowed me to understand my past experiences, but Dewey and Makiguchi brought me into the realm of contestation and compelled me to rethink the role of educators. They contributed to the transformation of who I am and in that, I found liberation.

Dewey believes the purpose of education is growth. Growth is both the end and the means (Noddings, 1998). Rather than education being an enterprise or means for servicing some particular aim, growth is its end and "growth tends toward more growth" (Noddings, 1998, p. 23). In *Democracy and Education*, Dewey (1916) describes humans as social. Engaging in social interactions allows us to communicate, inquire, and construct common values, beliefs, and knowledge. Learning, for Dewey, is the sharing of social experience, and happens in the kinds of experiences that make values significant and real for our own lives. Schooling that simply provides students with information for a later date, or what Paulo Freire (1968) called the banking concept of education, does not prepare one for democratic living. Learning is not arbitrarily imposed upon a student by a teacher or a powerful majority, but is determined democratically, which creates individual investment (Noddings, 1998). Democracy is more than just a political system, but "a mode of associated living" where decisions are made by a shared process of inquiry (Dewey, 1916, p. 91). Democracy is a process of living and should be under continual scrutiny, revision, and creation (Noddings, 1998). Education and learning are a part of

this process by which children become integrated into the democratic community and education emphasizes the child instead of the subject matter.

Unlike John Dewey, a Western philosopher, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi was an Eastern educator and philosopher who developed the system of value-creating pedagogy in the 4-volume work, *Soka kyoikugaku taikei* (The System of Value-Creating Pedagogy) from 1930-1934. Makiguchi, too, believed education is a social process and through education children should develop the capacity to become contributing members of society. To invest in children is to invest in society and to not invest in children results in the decline of society. Individuals seek happiness; therefore, this should be the objective of society, and of education. This is done through the creation of value, specifically the value of beauty, gain, and good (Bethel, 1989; Gebert & Joffee, 2007). When one is able to create value, happiness results, Makiguchi argued. Therefore, the purpose of education is for the happiness of the socially self-actualized individual and this is attained through value creation.

Where we see the ideas of Dewey and Makiguchi converge is in the use of education to fully develop the individual. Developing one's full humanity, or what Ikeda ([1974] 2010) calls the "greater self," is at the center of growth and transformation. Creating meaning and value is attained through interaction with the Other. Human life is social, and both Dewey and Makiguchi argue that the creation of value and meaning takes shape in those interactions with others. Transformative experiences happen in interaction with those different from ourselves. Democracy and value creation enhance one's own existence and leads to self-transformation and full human development.

Dewey and Makiguchi offer a kind of counter discourse to the current state of education, one which educators can use to interrogate and challenge the implications of their own practice.

Critical theory provides an approach for fully comprehending the state of education and the forces that have shaped it. While Dewey and Makiguchi are authors not typically included in the critical theory category, their epistemologies seek a just change for all and offer a new way to envision a more equitable form of education. They also offer the best means for taking practical, hope-filled steps forward. Within these frameworks, there is potential to remake education and the world. There is possibility for a new social order based on the full development of human beings.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Here I review the extant, mostly conceptual literature related to the core scope of my dissertation study. The review thus provides a brief history of political, economic, and social aspects of American education to frame the emergence of the accountability movement as part of a wider societal process that, in part, reproduces social inequalities. The critique of the accountability movement is not new. I have elected to provide a historical summary of the development of the accountability movement as well as a critical analysis of reform efforts including the use of high-stakes testing to outline broader societal implications. Another goal of this review is to shed light on why the perspectives of Latina teachers who serve low-income students are critical to the understanding of the accountability movement particularly how it impacts curriculum, pedagogy, and the purpose of education.

The United States and the Purpose of Education

Social Efficiency and the Curriculum

Every human society embarks on the education of youth (King, 2015). Through participation in community, an informal education takes place whereby children implicitly acquire the ability to live amongst others. However, schools have come to provide formal, and often compulsory, education whereby children are explicitly engaged in a systematized curriculum. In either case, the process of education is social in nature and skills and knowledge learned are in part to allow youth to become fully functioning adults within a larger society. Within formal institutional settings exist two general schools of thought for the purpose of education, one defining education as serving a practical purpose, while the other defining education as providing the "ability to live" (Bobbitt, 1918, p. 3). While both ideologies maintain

that the purpose of education meets a social end, the ends are distinctly and fundamentally different in their social outcomes.

Education for practical function asserts that the knowledge of most value is that which serves the individual in life, and to learn anything else is a waste of time, energy, and money. Bobbitt asserts that this knowledge base includes that which sheds light on current problems of industry, commerce, citizenship, social problems, current modes of thought - or anything useful within "an age of efficiency and economy" (1918, p. 5). The alternative perspective views learning as an opportunity to realize self-actualization through experiencing the "world-wide human life," by "enriching his consciousness, expanding the fields of his imagination," and "refining his appreciations" (Bobbitt, 1918, p. 5). Below is an attempt to elucidate school reform efforts made within the Progressive Era to frame the emergence of the purpose of education seen in our country today, that which strongly aligns with education for practical use. While providing a history of American education, I also touch on broader societal implications brought about by the ideology that education should be used for practical function, and attempt to offer a new social imaginary for the educational experience, one in which education serves to enrich and transform the lives of youth on their own terms.

Since America's inception, social, cultural, political, and economic factors have determined the educational experience, particularly the curriculum and pedagogical practices. Reform efforts often "win or lose according to the way they resonate with a particular social context, attract or repel particular constituencies, and respond to the social problems that are seen most salient at the time" (Labaree, 2010, p. 163). Shaped by a complex history, the ideological roots at the heart of American education can be traced back to the marriage between schools and the economy beginning during the American Progressive Era. In the early twentieth century, the

United States began to emerge as a global economic power. The economic complexity of the time brought about new social challenges which the educational system could no longer address including an industrial revolution, growing influx of immigrants, a division of labor, growing class and ethnic differences, and corporate expansion (Labaree, 2010). This historical time period lent itself well to the social efficiency model of education which has come to dominate the ethos of America education.

Social efficiency was first developed within industry and articulated by Frederick Winslow Taylor (1911) in *The Principles of Scientific Management*. In this publication, he promoted the use of scientific management techniques within industry to reduce waste in the workplace and an increase in production (Kliebard, 1986). Efficiency within labor was at the heart of this ideology. Imported from big business, progressive reformers began to articulate how these ideals could be implemented in education, particularly implicating the school curriculum. John Franklin Bobbitt, father of the field of curriculum, was a social efficiency supporter and believed that little waste should be found within the learning process (Kliebard, 1986; Schiro, 2013). In *The Curriculum*, Bobbit (1918) asserts that, "The word *curriculum* is Latin for a *race-course*, or the *race* itself, - a place of deeds, or a series of deeds. As applied to education, it is that s*eries of things which children and youth must do and experience* by way of developing abilities to do the things well that make up the affairs of adult life; and to be in all respects what adults should be" (p. 42). He offered two ways of defining the curriculum: "(1) it is the entire range of experiences, both undirected and directed, concerned in unfolding the abilities of the individual;" and "(2) it is the series of consciously directed training experiences that the schools use for completing and perfecting the unfoldment" (Bobbit, 1918, p. 43). He believed both were important, but more closely aligned himself with the second notion of curriculum whereby the

educators teach the “habits, skills, abilities, forms of thought, valuations, ambitions, etc.” to be effective laborers within their predetermined vocation (Bobbit, 1918, p. 43).

Coupled with Edward Thorndike’s learning psychology and its use of differentiated instruction to meet the individual needs of students, the curriculum was scientifically shaped by matching the abilities of students to their future occupational roles. In using a differentiated curriculum, David Snedden articulated how schooling could predict the course of a student’s social or vocational role in society (Kliebard, 1986; Schiro, 2013). The purpose of education focused on teaching individuals the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to function within the workplace (Fallace & Fantozzi, 2013). Learning objectives came from social and economic needs. Schooling and the purpose of education altogether, under the social efficiency model, came to “perpetuate the functioning of society” (Schiro, 2008, p. 4) by serving the professional spheres of the market (Rubin & Kazanjian, 2011). By placing an emphasis on the future capability of the student to fulfill societal needs, education took on a utilitarian role between the late 19th and early 20th century. Schools became the place whereby the needs of the nation would be met - an outgrowth of an industrialized society and economic in nature (Kliebard, 2004).

When first implemented, these progressive reform efforts were seen as egalitarian in nature, a way to provide equal opportunities for all and a way to improve society in a changing global economy (Labaree, 2010). The application of science within educational administration was seen as unbiased. Because of its use of scientific methods, including quantifiable data such as statistics or task analysis, the sorting of children into their probable career destinations was considered objective and value-free (Schiro, 2013). In this way, children would receive an education according to their capabilities while developing their vocational usefulness and

ultimately becoming more socially responsible in their adult professional lives (Rubin & Kazanjian, 2011). Early on, however, critical critiques of the social efficiency model began to emerge.

In creating a differentiated curriculum, shaped by science, students would be sorted into different levels of intelligence, academic skills, and capabilities. The use of standardized testing, for example, would determine their future trajectories within the labor market in a new industrial age. By stratifying the curriculum to that which services particular spheres of industry, education inherently became unequal - limiting social mobility, access to resources and opportunities, and reproducing the existing social order (Labaree, 2010). A harsher interpretation of the social efficiency ideology characterized this period as a time of "corporate consolidation, organizational revolution, and the imposition of middle-class values on immigrants, minorities, and the poor" (Fallace & Fantozzi, 2013, p. 145). For many, social efficiency was seen as an intellectual mobilization of students to serve the interest of the modern economy, leading to a "bureaucratic, racist, and inequitable educational system" (Fallace & Fantozzi, 2013, p. 143). Rather than being concerned with social justice and uplift, social efficiency places more emphasis on the capability of the child to fill social needs within society and therefore has been likened to a form of social control that privileges particular groups of society, while marginalizing and disenfranchising others. Changes to the curriculum made during the American Progressive Era underlie the accountability and standards movement seen in education today.

Engineering Schooling: Standards-Based Movement and the Origins of Accountability

While the social efficiency model laid the groundwork for a shift in the purpose of education toward one of vocational preparation, policies that truly galvanized this ideology began during the Presidency of Ronald Reagan. *A Nation at Risk* (1983) was published providing

an overview of the performance of public education within the United States. This landmark publication boldly declared "our Nation is at risk," stating that American education was experiencing a "crisis" with failing schools, students, teachers, and teacher education programs. It characterized American education as subpar when compared to other industrialized nations in "commerce, industry, science, and technological innovation" (United States, 1983, p. 1; Means, 2013; Taubman, 2009). *A Nation at Risk* offered specific recommendations to remedy these problems including increased rigor within the classroom, a call for standards that students would have to meet in order to graduate high school, and increased pay and training for teachers with that pay being tied directly to student achievement (United States, 1983). Although there have since been critiques of this report as having been fabricated or manufactured to support the interests of industry, major reform efforts were underway to remedy many of the concerns it addressed (Taubman, 2009).

This report is credited with policy reforms, such as the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act (2001), in an effort to raise educational outcomes via standards and to hold students, teachers, and schools accountable for results (Gamoran, 2015). This law is arguably the most significant educational legislation passed in American history that dramatically increased the role of the federal government within the educational setting and paved the way for other such policies including Race to the Top (2009) and Every Student Succeeds (2015). These policies made it possible for state and local governments to further support federal mandates. Signed into law in 2001, NCLB is known for its accountability initiatives that held states and public schools accountable for improving student achievement. Accordingly, student success would be equated with mastery of educational standards in what has been termed standards-based accountability reforms.

Standards provide a set curriculum that determines what knowledge students need to learn and teachers need to teach within a particular content area (Darling-Hammond, 2004). Standards also provide a tool by which to evaluate students, teachers, administrators, and schools. Their implementation into the curriculum have several underlying assumptions including, the belief that students do not know enough to be competitive within a global economy, their use leads to higher achievement and promotes equal educational opportunities for all, and those best positioned to determine what should be taught in schools are "experts" (Vinson, 2001). Their implementation was grounded in research that showed higher standards increase educational rigor, provide high-quality instructional practices, elevated academic performance, and reduced inequalities by raising minimum performance levels for low-achieving students (Gamoran, 2015). Well-developed standards or at least the rhetoric behind such reform efforts, would be used to inform curricula and improve schooling, whereby all students benefited (Darling-Hammond, 2004; Levinson, 2012). Thus, standards came to shape learning and the curriculum.

As standardization increased, those responsible for setting standards considered ways to measure student achievement of those standards, as "standards are meaningless if there is no way to determine (via assessment) and ensure (via accountability) that they are being met" (Levinson, 2012, p. 261). Standardized testing became the reasonable approach that states took to measure and identify students who did and did not perform well on those standards. How a standard is assessed or measured often ends up "guiding the understanding and actions of those attempting to meet the standard," hence shaping pedagogical practices used to achieve the standards (Levinson, 2012, p. 261). Under the social efficiency model, preparation for particular trades dictated the school curriculum and the skills students needed to learn. With the passing of

standards-based reform efforts, standards now determined the curriculum, assessments, and pedagogical practices (Rubin & Kazanjian, 2011).

Standardized tests have commonly been referred to as high-stakes testing because important decisions are made based on their results, thereby holding students, teachers, administrators, and schools accountable (Connel, 2013; Darling-Hammond, 2004; Levinson, 2012; Taubman, 2009). Proponents of standardized tests believe that sanctions help to motivate failing schools by making necessary changes to improve their students' scores and adhere to the achievement of set standards. The results from high-stakes testing are often made available to the public and have also been used to rank and categorize students, teachers, and schools (Au, 2009).

The scores on these tests have also been known to affect student promotion from grade to grade, program placement (e.g. Advanced placement, gifted), high school graduation, compensation or tenure status of teachers and administrators, school funding, and have come to reflect the school's quality, resulting in school closures for those who do not meet adequate yearly progress (Barksdale-Ladd & Thomas, 2000; Connel, 2013). Sanctions and rewards associated with high-stakes testing show that school curriculum and pedagogical practices have narrowed significantly toward one of test preparation (Carter & Lochte, 2017; Connel, 2013; Hunter & Bartee, 2003). Because standards predetermine teaching and learning, little creativity and originality within the development of curriculum exists (Rubin & Kazanjian, 2011). As a result of negative sanctions, less time is also dedicated to other subject areas that are not measured on standardized tests such as social studies, world languages, art, or physical education. Levinson also found that "educators and policy makers have reallocated time, money,

and training resources to focus on those skills and content for which they will be held accountable" (2012, p. 258).

High-stakes testing and the scores they produce have been represented as "objective, transparent, and measurable" numbers that give the impression of clear indications for classroom experiences and learning (Taubman, 2009, p. 2). However, critics question whether standardized tests are able to provide a comprehensive portrayal of student abilities, what happens in the classroom, and whether all students are able to perform at the same level on any given measure (Cramer, Little, & McHatton, 2017). Policies at the federal, state, and local levels have come to support high-stakes testing which in turn has come to govern "curricula, teaching practices, teaching preparation, school administration, education auditing, licensing and accreditation practices, the progress and geographical movement of students, the distribution of resources, and the operation of for-profit educational enterprises" (Taubman, 2009, p. 6). Many also argue that knowledge forms within set standards are the values, meanings, and language practices of the White, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant majority (Rubin & Kazanjian, 2011).

Neoliberalism as Ideology

An account of standards, assessments, and accountability is incomplete without examining the ideology that underlies these reform efforts. Ideologies are "a sort of 'system' of ideas, beliefs, fundamental commitments, or values about a social reality" (Apple, 2004, p. 18). To Apple (1982), ideologies are not just a set of beliefs, but are lived "meanings, practices, and social relations" (p. 15). Institutions, such as schools, become the place where dominant ideologies are produced and maintained. The ideological roots of social efficiency were originally developed in industry, but gradually permeated education. As a result, it helped pave

the way for an ideological model that further supported economic efforts within global capitalism, known as neoliberalism (Connell, 2013).

In the 1970s, American education saw the rise of standardization and accountability policies that aligned education with economic efforts. This neoliberal ideology became a political and economic practice in all spheres of life that supported the freedom of individuals as consumers in a free market. Its development changed the relationship between the state and its citizens (Biesta, 2004; Davies & Bansel, 2007). According to Biesta (2004), the change became "less a political relationship — that is, a relationship between government and citizens who, together, are concerned about the common good — and more an economic relationship — that is, a relationship between the state as provider and the taxpayer as consumer of public services (most significantly, health care, education, and social and economic security and safety)" (p. 237). Not only was the relationship between the two changed, but so too were the roles and identities of the state and people. Under neoliberalism citizens are no longer passive, as they were within a welfare state, but become self-reliant and have "rights, duties, obligations and expectations" as active entrepreneurs (Davies & Bansel, 2007, p. 252).

Change in the relationship between citizens and government led to a "transformation in state restructuring and social life under globalization and advanced capitalism" (Davies & Bansel, 2007; see also Means, 2013, p. 16). Consumerism, profit, and choice are at the heart of this economic ideology, and employability and economic productivity within a global economy are of most importance. By fulfilling their new responsibility and patriotic obligation to the state of pursuing economic independence and well-being, consumer-citizens are able to support themselves and their families (Davies & Bansel, 2007). Neoliberalism's development exacerbated the role of school to one in which education functions to develop the skills needed to

serve the economic growth agenda that produces consumer-citizens and a strong workforce in a capitalistic society (Connell, 2013; Manteaw, 2008). In doing so, schools "maximize the entrepreneurial conduct of each individual" and create an individual who is able to compete in the marketplace (Davies & Bansel, 2007, p. 252). Under neoliberalism, the purpose of education shifts toward state interests in support of an industrialized capitalistic global economy, and students become the human capital within that future workforce (Connel, 2013; Means, 2013).

Educational policies such as accountability measures and the purpose of education should be understood against the ideologies of neoliberalism and economic changes that coincide with global capitalism. Because employability and economic productivity are of most importance, school reform efforts in the United States have increasingly taken on and supported a neoliberal model of efficiency (Connel, 2013). The primary purpose of the education, under neoliberalism, becomes one of business and industry and appears to offer fair and equitable educational opportunities for all; for example, requiring all students to achieve high standards via "objective" tests (Apple, 2009; Taubman 2009). Consumer culture calls for good quality schools and standardized testing and their results have become the measure of efficient 'quality' schools. The use of market mechanisms to shape educational policy not only shapes the public's understanding of the purpose of education, it also works to shift their expectations of schools themselves (Manteaw, 2008).

Neoliberalism as Hegemonic: The Conflation of Democracy and Neoliberalism

In the sections above, I provided a brief history of social efficiency, standards-based reform, and accountability as it relates to neoliberalism as an ideology. Below I look to the work of Antonio Gramsci, particularly his use of hegemony, to explain how neoliberalism permeates all aspects of life and has become a "form of governance" and a "lived condition" within an

industrial society (Means, 2013, p. 5). I attempt to demonstrate how it has worked to not only reshape the public's understanding of the purpose of education but also our fundamental democratic beliefs.

Antonio Gramsci was a socialist and Marxist theorist who lived in Italy during the 1920s and 30 under the reign of Mussolini. He studied how one class is able to rule over another, less powerful, class. While in prison for leading the Italian Communist Party, he wrote *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (Gramsci, 1971) in which hegemony was a key concept used to understand how ideological rule can be used to control dominant ideas within a society. He looked at capitalism as a dominant economic system that controls the way individuals think and behave as citizens, workers, and consumers. For Gramsci, ideological control, unlike military or political force or economic dominance is the highest form of hegemony. Individuals within society are not coerced, but rather their everyday choices and behavior provide consent (Gross, 2011; Slattery, 2003). The gaining of this consent comes from societal institutions such as policies, family, church, media, and schools (Levinson, 2011; Slattery, 2003). Therefore, Gramsci concluded, hegemony works as a "form of governance" or control, and is a "lived condition" in our everyday lives and schooling is intricately involved in maintaining hegemony (Gross, 2011; Means, 2013, p. 5).

The ethos of the market is so powerfully hegemonic that democracy has become conflated with neoliberalism. The hegemony of neoliberalism has worked to transform and reframe democratic values and discourse; hence it has reformulated our understanding of democracy altogether. Below, I use our notions of democracy, particularly our ideas of choice and equality, to (1) demonstrate how democracy has become conflated with market values found under neoliberalism; (2) to offer examples of discourse used to change democratic ideals and

values within society; and (3) to illustrate how hegemony functions within education to maintain an unequal society where by one class is able to maintain power over another, less powerful, class and by proxy race and ethnicity become implicated in the process.

Democracy is both a political system and an abstract utopian ideal. At the heart of this ideal lies equality, transparency, choice, and the right of the people to exercise their voice and power (Levinson, 2011). Neoliberal policies present as more democratic because they allow for freedom of choice and are responsive to the needs of the consumer (Hursh, 2005). The publication of testing results, for example, allows for transparency and enables consumers to make "informed" choices about the quality of schools based on "objective" numbers produced via standardized testing (Taubman, 2009). These, when used correctly, can be powerfully used to hold others accountable for appropriate use of public expenditures.

Neoliberalism assumes that market-oriented principles operate more efficiently and effectively within public institutions and services (Connel, 2013; Davies & Bansel, 2007; Manteaw, 2008; Means, 2013). Public services, including public schooling, are supported by taxpayers, therefore appropriate expenditures of public resources should be done efficiently and wisely (Levinson, 2011). Since the implementation of standardized testing, accountability measures set in place include required reports that schools make adequate yearly progress (AYP). Schools failing to make AYP face numerous consequences, including losing funding, or the threat of privatization of administration or the school as a whole – often in the form of a turnaround or charter school (Vinson, 2001). Many schools that failed to make AYP after their probationary status result in closures (Cucchiara, 2013; Lipman, 2011; & Means, 2013).

Under neoliberalism, a complex relationship between public expenditures, consumerism and profit exists. Justification for school closures argue that public expenditures should not be

made haphazardly, but rather wisely and with clear expectations. Therefore, schools and teachers that do not improve test scores, see a disinvestment of resources into their school and a reinvestment into schools that are performing well (Cucchiara, 2013; Lipman, 2011; Means, 2013). Supporters of such a model believe that public schools and teachers are often unresponsive to the needs of students and communities because they know parents are not able to send their children elsewhere. Publication of testing results and school rankings allow the public to see how well schools fair when compared to others while also holding teachers accountable. Therefore, consumer-citizens are able to practice their "democratic" right to choose. A disinvestment of public resources into schools that fail to make AYP becomes justified under these pretenses and makes way for privatization efforts within public domains, a manifestation of neoliberalism.

The privatization of public infrastructures like education means that like small businesses, with no to little regulation, private producers are able to behave as they please. By offering choice, in the form of new school options, like charter schools or vouchers, the consumer-citizen has options regarding their children's schools and the funding which "introduces a competitive market approach to the allocation of resources" (Hursh, 2005, p.4). Deregulation of private enterprise is important for profit, allowing for private capital in public domains. Publications which continue to present public education as failing help to fuel the public's call for private school options. This gives parents, who have now been redefined as consumers, more choices in the form of school options and allows for school regulation to fall into the hands of the state (Hursh, 2005; Means, 2013). Private schools have thus seen an increase in federal subsidies.

America's public education has been significantly implicated by neoliberal reform efforts. Today, the dominant media, the financial and political elite, and a corporate consensus, have amplified the failure of public education, declaring it "an antiquated social institution incapable of meeting the demands and assorted crises of the global era" (Means, 2013, p. 1). The future of the nation is said to then rest on the restructuring of the public school system whereby policies at the federal, state, and local levels have come to regulate and govern "curricula, teaching practices, teaching preparation, school administration, education auditing, licensing and accreditation practices, the progress and geographical movement of students, the distribution of resources, and the operation of for-profit educational enterprises" (Taubman, 2009, p. 6).

Deregulation of private enterprise is important for profit, where the contradiction lies is in policies passed under neoliberal measures that help to support these economic endeavors, placing regulations on schools via accountability measures. No Child Left Behind required that all states have curricular standards for all subject-areas and standardized testing to measure performance of those standards. Standardization of the curriculum has also presented as democratic. It presents as equal and fair because all students receive a homogenous and mechanized curriculum, instruction, and assessments and 'no children are left behind' (Hursh, 2005; Levinson, 2012). By setting policies in place that require all students to achieve high standards, standardization appears fair for all. In this way, neoliberalism works to not only reshape the public's understanding of public institutions but also public institutions themselves.

Neoliberalism as Unequal

While the hegemony of accountability has led to state take-overs, school closures, choice and voucher options, and the sanctioning of low-performing schools, it has resulted in little academic achievement or improvements for disadvantaged students. Sanctions associated with

performance outcomes have in many ways further negatively impacted the schools serving historically marginalized youth (Cramer et al., 2018). While standards are used to homogenize curriculum and pedagogy, classrooms and communities are becoming ever more diverse with differing needs (Rubin & Kazanjian, 2011). While standardization establishes common goals and expectations for schools, teachers, and students and reflects a commitment to the ideal that all children deserve a high-quality education, the reality is that schools serve different communities with differing needs. These differences cut across race, ethnicity, class, gender, languages, and special needs (Levinson, 2012). Policies set in place to uphold their use in the curriculum do not take into account differences among and within schools, and punish schools when differences arise (Vinson, 2001).

The works of Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron (1977) offer a critical lens by which to understand how standardization and accountability, including high-stakes testing, work to further disadvantage already disadvantaged groups. The involvement of business in schooling and education is not new as we have seen with the development of the social efficiency model, what is new is the increased emphasis on certain knowledge forms at the expense of others. It is not simply the economic sector that acts to influence the inequalities we find in education; it is also the symbolic property known as cultural capital. According to Bourdieu, cultural capital is a form of symbolic capital or "a symbolic credit that one acquires through learning to enact and embody the desired signs of social standing within a social field" (Levinson et al., 2015, p. 121). Like privileged knowledge forms, cultural capital gets judged as "good taste," "intelligence," or signs of "quality" (Levinson et al., 2015, p. 121). According to Bourdieu, cultural capital allows those of higher social standing to gain greater legitimacy and currency. Those who lack "legitimate" cultural capital do not gain the same social standing.

Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) found that knowledge taught in schools is arbitrary and represents dominant power and culture. Schools accordingly function to produce and distribute knowledge as a commodity that maintains the dominant economic, political, and cultural arrangements that already exist in society (Apple, 2009). Like the unequal distribution of economic capital, there is a similar distribution of cultural capital. In education, there are negative consequences for children of nondominant backgrounds who do not possess the "appropriate" cultural knowledge forms. Those who do not have the cultural capital of the middle-class experience low academic performance, achievement, and alienation (Levinson et al., 2015). Epistemological understandings of knowledge link in-school knowledge forms to the social order and the reproduction of social inequalities. Schools help to distribute cultural knowledge that privilege specific groups over others. Therefore, the cultural knowledge considered most prestigious in schools is linked to economic reproduction and cultural capital and acts as "a filtering device in the reproduction of a hierarchical society," thereby reproducing the existing and unequal class structure we see today (Apple, 2009, p. 31; see also Levinson, 2011).

Many have argued that the system of standards and testing measure values, skills, meanings, and language practices found within White dominant Anglo upper-middle class, Protestant practices of living (Apple, 2009; Connel, 2013, Rubin & Kazanjian, 2011; Taubman, 2009). Because the knowledge and cultural capital of the middle class is employed in schools, it favors those who already have access to it and those who do not are not surprisingly worse off academically than middle-class children. Thus, the accountability policies of standardization and high-stakes testing help to solidity the hierarchy of success and failure and are biased against students of color (Rubin & Kazanjian, 2011). As a result, schools that serve mainly working-

class communities and collectively occupy the bottom layers of society, are re-defined as failures and the unequal social order is maintained.

In schools that align with neoliberalism students are trained into the values and knowledge forms of past generations which leads to the sorting of those students into their appropriate social roles or jobs. This also works in the sorting of power, whereby the privileging of dominant social groups is reproduced (Connel, 2013). While educational policies help to support societal inequalities, the neoliberal narrative works insidiously to place the blame of their failures on already disadvantaged population of students. The discourse that works to sustain this system goes as follows, "if teachers and curricula were more tightly controlled, more closely linked to the needs of business and industry, more technically oriented, with more stress on traditional values and workplace norms and dispositions, then the problems of achievement, of unemployment, of international economic competitiveness, of the disintegration of the inner city, and so on would largely disappear" (Apple, 2009, p. xix).

The stratification of knowledge is linked to the distribution of culture and economic power and are not only intricately connected to inequalities but also to issues of race (Apple, 2009, p. 36). By taking on this perspective, one begins to recognize the inequalities in the larger society as they connect to the economic structure and linkages between knowledge and power. According to this perspective, schools function to produce and distribute knowledge held by the middle class and upper class. This functions to legitimate Anglocentric values and meanings while at the same time it negates the history, culture, and language practices of minority students" (Apple, 1982, p. 14). In the United States, race, ethnicity, and class are implicated in the process as the knowledge forms of the Anglo middle and upper classes is unevenly distributed or limited to those who have access to them. Because working-class parents are not

able to impart to their children the knowledge and experiences of the middle class, which they do not possess, academic achievement remains low. Schools, however, help to supplement what happens in the homes of middle-class students, therefore these students outperform disadvantaged groups (Gándara, 2010). Schools, therefore, are not natural or neutral settings, but instead are determined by economic, political, cultural, and ideological factors that privilege certain groups while disadvantaging others (Lipman, 2011).

Placing blame, for example on teachers or public education, for injustices seen in society diverts away from the implications of policies enacted under neoliberal agendas. By framing schools as the root of the problem, accountability policies often appear to help fix social problems. This has the effect of placing responsibility on educational institutions or on the individual and expecting less from governments. It makes schools appear as though they are not able to function on their own but need to be controlled and regulated by the state in order to run more efficiently and effectively. This also has the effect of placing blame and responsibility on the individual.

Prior to neoliberalism, alternative economic and political forms, such as the Keynesian welfare policies, were more concerned with social uplift and inequalities. These social programs focused on the redistribution of resources and power (Davies & Bansel, 2007; Lipman, 2013). Under neoliberalism, these policies were viewed as ‘enabling’, therefore social justice, community welfare, and equity no longer remained a concern (Davies & Bansel, 2007, p. 251). Incidentally, these too are democratic values that were reshaped by the hegemony of neoliberalism. Governments under this ideology take less responsibility for the welfare of individuals and instead “provide” them with the “knowledge, powers and freedoms to take care of themselves” (Davies & Bansel, 2007, p. 251). Because schools view students as human capital

and serve to provide students with the skills and knowledge to function within a global market economy, a process oriented to the future, individuals become responsible for themselves, and inequalities become the result of their own "inadequacy, which is to be remedied not by increasing dependency through social welfare, but by requiring that individuals strive to become productive members of the workforce" (Hursh, 2005, p. 4). The use of business and industry discourse helps to sustain this ideology as it appears to offer fair and equitable educational opportunities for all (Apple, 2009; Taubman 2009).

Neoliberalism moves away from the support of social welfare programs, reducing the collective responsibility for the impoverished, to one in support of property rights, free trade, and a free market. As previously mentioned, educational policies such as NCLB (2002), Race to the Top (2009), and Every Student Succeeds (2015) have increased the role of the federal, state, and local governments within education, but not in an effort to reduce social inequalities. Rather, policies such as standards based-reform efforts, accountability measures, and the sanctions and rewards associated with testing results, negatively and disproportionately affect impoverished children of color, and further limit access to equitable education. Disparities in public education have been intensified by neoliberal policies (Lipman, 2011). It denies children access to genuine and equitable public education and has introduced a shift in the purpose of education towards the fulfillment of state interests in support of an industrialized capitalist global economy and away from the aim of meeting the needs of the individual (Means, 2013). While standardization and accountability measures have the potential to fulfill democratic ideals and to empower impoverished communities, they instead work to limit, impede, and undercut democratic ideals rather than promoting them (Levinson, 2012). They are an inappropriate tool for promoting a truly democratic form of education (Levinson, 2012).

Teachers Under Accountability

Neoliberalism has changed the working conditions for teachers (Connel, 2013). The most obvious part of this change reflects the intensified testing regime that is central to the neoliberal agenda in education. High-stakes competitive testing results in formidable pressures on teachers to teach to the test. As teacher performance is assessed by the testing results of their students, teachers must function within the parameters of standardization and the constraints of accountability measures (Connel, 2013; Noddings, 2009). Thus, educators must answer to authorities for what they accomplish or fail to accomplish (Noddings, 2009).

Accountability measures often undermine, conflict with, and strip away teachers' ability to practice their professional expertise in curricular and instructional decision-making (Pace, 2009). For many schools, a reliance on testing data is used as evidence of student achievement. This has resulted in the narrowing of curriculum to the knowledge and skills being tested. Pedagogically, drill and skill practices have been implemented to reflect the needed performance students will have to emit during the test. Prescribed curricula and pedagogy have limited teachers' capacity to make autonomous judgement regarding the educational interests and needs of their students. Taubman (2009) describes this as an intrusion on the professional lives of teachers whereby their educational vision and philosophy are "given a shelf-life by the implementation of micro-practices imported from the corporate sector and mandated from afar but presented as empowering and sensitive to the specificity of locale" (p. 95). The process of deprofessionalization and heightened teacher surveillance has limited the "intellectual, aesthetic and ethical life of teachers" (Taubman, 2009, p. 5) and has reduced teachers' curricular freedom and innovation (Levinson, 2012).

Educational policies in support of neoliberalism mandate that teachers teach the ideas of ruling classes and help to further legitimize, replicate, and distribute knowledge that helps to sort students into their future roles, which simultaneously also reinforces divisions in society through the curriculum and pedagogy (Apple, 2009). The stripping away of teacher autonomy has led to frustration and disillusionment as well as insecurity within the teaching workforce (Rubin & Kazanjian, 2011).

Latino Teacher Identity Under Accountability

Neoliberalism has reshaped our understanding of the purpose of education. While Antonio Gramsci asserts that hegemony is an ideological dominance used by powerful groups to assert control over less powerful groups, he also asserts that complete ideological dominance is never attainable. There always exist challenges to dominant ideas within society (Slattery, 2003). Research that examines educators under strong neoliberal demands can offer insight into how they challenge, strive for, and imagine possibilities for change and transformation within their practice, as well as for the students they serve. As teachers enact everyday practices, it becomes important to understand how they negotiate top-down authority measures, the curriculum, pedagogy, and how their professional and personal identity conflict with neoliberal ideologies found in the classroom (Pace, 2009).

Teacher identity consists of both personal and professional subjectivities. Often the process of negotiating conflicting positions and ideologies takes place while creating the professional self (Alsup, 2006). Olsen (2008) found that teachers struggle to reconcile identity conflicts between their "long-held expectations" of teaching with "current teaching realities," and to "merge their personal self-understanding with their developing professional identities" (p. 37).

Under neoliberalism, teachers are often asked to use prescribed curriculum and instructional practices. How does one take on a "culturally scripted, often narrowly defined, professional role while maintaining individuality" (Alsup, 2006, p. 4)? A scripted identity of a teacher generally includes female, white, heterosexual, and middle class. These stereotypical markers are consistent with the current teaching demographic that exists in the United States today (Alsup, 2006), with 80% of teachers being White, 9% Hispanic, 7% were Black, 2% were Asian and the remainder as American Indian or Alaska Native (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018).

A teachers' own sense of racial and ethnic identity may seem inconsequential to the everyday practices enacted in the teaching process. However, these personal subjectivities and dispositions are intricately connected to the self and integral to teaching. People are products of their histories, and class, race and ethnicity are particularly important markers that strongly implicate the process of teaching, including student success (Alsup, 2006; Olsen, 2008). Within their practice, teachers move from one facet of their identity to another and can "choose to act in certain ways considered by them to be coherent with their own self-understandings" (Olsen, 2008, p. 24). An analysis of these allows one to interrogate, theorize, and connect the role of educators to student achievement.

The professional and the personal are inextricable, and teachers mediate and are mediated by the educational context and the self (Olsen, 2008). Teacher identity formation influences and impacts teachers' careers and those they teach. Research indicates that having a teacher of the same race/ethnicity can positively impact attitudes, motivation, and achievement (Egalite, Kisida, & Winters, 2015). However, each day, teachers face constraints and opportunities within their practice. How does one negotiate contradictions in personal philosophies, teacher goals, and

personal identity? If the assertions by critical theorists are correct- that neoliberal measures replicate the educational inequalities we see today and particularly negatively affect Latino students, then how do Latino teachers reconcile enacting the practices that contribute to these inequalities? What constraints and opportunities do these teachers find as the personal and professional come together?

Ethnic and racial diversity within the United States is growing. 50.5 million Latinos made up the 308.7 million people who live within the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010), and are the largest minority group in the United States (Contreras, 2004; Gándara, 2010). According to the United States Census there was a 60% increase between the 1990 and 2000 census in Latinos. Predictions suggest that the changing ethnic diversity will continue to show an increase in the Latino population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

Latinos also constitute the fastest growing school-age population. The year 1998 saw a shift in which Latino children became the largest majority school aged children than African Americans (Contreras, 2004). Unfortunately, of all majority ethnic groups, Latinos are also the least educated of any minority group (Gándara, 2010). Poverty within Latino communities affects access to educational opportunities and works to further disadvantage students (Contreras, 2004). Lack of exposure to education begins at a young age within this community as access to quality preschools is limited (Gándara, 2010). Since the passing of accountability measures, there has been an increase in dropout rates as students are not able to pass standardized tests that effect grade promotion or graduation. This limits or impedes future access to higher education and jobs. This is particularly concerning as this population of Latino students continues to increase. Between 2000 and 2015 the United States saw a 47% increase of Latino students (Foxen & National Council of La Raza, 2016). As this large and continually growing generation

of students will become the future of our nation including “future workers, voters, parents, and taxpayers” (Foxen & National Council of La Raza, 2016, p. 1), it is important that a solid investment is placed in their well-being as this too is an investment in our nation itself.

Historically, African American or Black students have been marginalized within the educational system. Contreras (2004) and Gándara (2005) assert that a White and non-White paradigm exists within the United States whereby the primary binary has consisted of the White majority and the Black minority. This trend began in the 1960s, which reflected a 90% White, 4% Latino, and 10% African American population of the time. While this remains a concerning problem that has yet to be remedied, the binary has ignored Latino history within the United States. Demographic shifts in population suggest a need for revision to this paradigm particularly as it affects a significant and continually growing Latino population. This reevaluation should in no way undermine the racial and ethnic struggles of other groups, but rather these statistics suggest that the future health of the United States depends highly on how well Latinos fair in schools, jobs, and in society overall (Gándara, 2005).

The population of minority students in primary and secondary schools continues to increase, however the population of teachers remains predominantly white (Luke, 2017). In 2018, the national distribution of teachers consisted of 80% White, 7% Black, and 9% Latinos, 2% Asian, and the rest consisted of other ethnic groups (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018). According to Farber (1991), Black and Latino students constitute more than 25% of the 40 million children enrolled in public schools, while Latino teachers make up only 10.5% of the teaching force, consequently, most new teachers entering into the field are members of the majority group (Flores & Clark, 1997). According to the 2017 Illinois Report Card, only 5.6% of Hispanic teachers made up the 129,575 teachers in the state, while 83.3% were white teachers.

As accountability measures affect curriculum and pedagogy in high school, they do not properly prepare students for college while also hindering Latino acceptance into college (Gándara, 2005). Limiting access into college means Latino students are unable to enter into the teaching profession. In effect, these policies work to reproduce and maintain the existing social order.

When asked, Olsen (2008) found that teachers want to improve the lives of their students and social mobility is one means of doing so. Do Latino teachers engage in the curricular and pedagogical practices that maintain the status quo or do they challenge the practices that do so? My proposed dissertation study is predominantly concerned with the effects of accountability on Latino teachers' capacity to make autonomous judgment about curriculum and pedagogy in the interests of their pupils – that of low-income students. Research regarding the role of Latino teachers is minimal, particularly regarding their perspectives under accountability measures (Flores, Clark, Claeys, & Villarreal, 2007). While teacher turnover and retention, quality of teachers, and teacher education under accountability measures exists within the literature (Valli & Buese, 2007), little if any research exists on the experience of Latino teachers within this new era.

Hispanic teachers are uniquely diverse in cultural backgrounds, allowing them to make connections with students, particularly those who speak Spanish. According to Ladson-Billings (1997) when teachers resemble the backgrounds of their students, students are positively impacted in both academic and nonacademic achievement. Cultural bonds aid in a teacher's ability to better prepare students. The lived and experiential experience of Latino teachers is important to the understanding of accountability measures for many reasons. Teachers directly impact the experiences of students and have long-term implications on their lives. Here these

underrepresented perspectives are used to examine how teachers disrupt, challenge, and upset the inequalities found in education today.

Conceptual Framework: An East-West Ecology of Thought and Practice

Given my own experiences, identity, and the neoliberal manifestations in education outlined above, I employ what Goulah (2010a, 2010b) calls an "East-West ecology of thought and practice" as a conceptual framework for my dissertation research. Below, I provide the conceptual frameworks of John Dewey and Tsunesaburo Makiguchi as alternative ways of thinking and knowing.

John Dewey's Democratic Education

John Dewey, arguably America's greatest educational philosopher, asserted a morally superior pedagogical alternative to the one that currently exists. While there are progressive schools that take Dewey as their loadstar, his ideas remain largely "outside the walls of the school," yet "preserve their visibility" precisely because they are "trying to find a way in" (Larabee, 2010, p. 163). He asserts that the classroom should lead to the happiness and growth of students. His purpose of education is self-transformation, where the process involves continually engaging with the world to create a meaningful life. He sees the individual as part of a community and therefore being shaped by it. For Dewey, meaning is made through the process of democracy, where all participants have a say and take partial responsibility in its organization. It "employs rules, procedures and facilities to make sure that citizens are not hindered in their opportunities to develop themselves fully" (van der Ploeg, 2016, p. 2). Democracy tries to limit unjust circumstances due to social position or background and encourages the development of the individual through social means. The interests and contributions of others are important and should be accessible and equitable to all. To Dewey, democratic education should break down

unjust and restrictive aspects of society rather than preserving them and should provide opportunities for self-development. Education should promote a continued capacity for growth, flexibility, and adaptability to one's life through continued learning (van der Ploeg, 2016).

Dewey's ideas of democracy are far more than a political system. Democracy is "a mode of associated living, of conjoint communal experience" and therefore "comes into being through expanded communication, shared experience, and an abiding disposition to seek interaction with others rather than to shun them" (as cited in Hansen, 2007, p. 27). Communication with the Other, "features ever-widening and ever-new channels for mutual contact and understanding" (Hansen, 2007, p. 28). Inherent in a democratic society is an openness to learn from all within that society and a willingness to remain "open, flexible, and responsive" with those that "differ in values, outlooks, and hopes" (Hansen, 2007, p. 28). In this democratic process of learning, an individual attains a healthy social disposition while also preparing one to realize his or her own growth.

Tsunesaburo Makiguchi's Pedagogy of Value Creation

Tsunesaburo Makiguchi was a Japanese educator and philosopher during his lifetime (1871-1944). He asserted that the goal of education is the pursuit of authentic happiness. And he argued that authentic happiness does not come from the cognition of truth; rather, he believed that happiness resulted from an individual's capacity to create meaning, or "value," from the cognition of truth, meaning that has personal gain, serves a social good, and which is aesthetically pleasing to the senses (Goulah, 2015). The teacher's task, for Makiguchi, is to foster students' ever-developing capacity to create value from any circumstance. Moreover, true happiness, to Makiguchi, was attained as the student experienced membership within a society. The experiences of participation within and making contributions to a society would lead to

value creation, and thus, happiness. The capacity to create value thus enhances a person's life and leads to lifelong happiness.

Makiguchi's educational ideas and purpose were shaped by the times in which he lived. Japan was industrializing and its government was moving headlong into a nationalist and militarist state. Many of Makiguchi's publications were a response to these sociopolitical changes, and unfortunately, because his ideas did not align with those of Japan's militaristic government, they were rejected and ultimately resulted in his imprisonment, where he later died (Goulah, 2015).

In 1930, Makiguchi's theories on value-creating pedagogy were first published in a pamphlet called *Outline of the System of Value-Creating Pedagogy*. He later shared his full philosophy in *The System of Value-Creating Pedagogy,* a four-volume collection published between 1930 and 1934. In these writings, he outlined the purpose of education as the ability for an individual to create value, which allows them to lead fulfilling lives (Goulah, 2012, p. 1). According to Bethel (1989), Makiguchi believed that "human life is the process of creating value and education should guide us toward that end" (p. 54). If human life is the process of creating value, then humans are what they learn. Makiguchi believed, according to Bethel, that "value is a real-life concern with real-life applications" (p. 54). Value arises within contexts and can be created by engaging with subjects and objects; it is self-created and subjective. Value lies in one's judgments of beauty, the benefit or gain one identifies, and in the good, or "public gain," one can facilitate for others. As Ikeda (2010) articulates it: "Put simply, value creation is the capacity to find meaning, to enhance one's own existence and contribute to the well-being of others, under any circumstance" (p. 112). Creation refers to the process of "bringing to light whatever has bearing on human life from among elements already existing in nature" (Bethel,

1989, pp. 56-57). Makiguchi believed that it is the role of teachers to foster the creation of such value.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This study explores how Latina teachers within the Midwest Charter Network articulate their own ideals regarding the purpose of education; their educational philosophies and pedagogical practices; and their formation of curricula under the pressures of the accountability movement. In conjunction with this, it also seeks to understand how their personal race, ethnicity, culture, and overall identity are implicated in their perspectives. In order to understand these phenomena, I conducted a qualitative multisite instrumental case study on Latina teachers that addressed four research questions: (a) When thinking about education under the effects of neoliberal politics, how do Latino teachers who work in a charter school conceive the purpose of education? (b) How do these teachers describe their experiences teaching in a charter school in the context of neoliberal accountability politics? (c) How is their identity implicated in the teaching process? (d) Do these teachers subscribe to educational philosophies resonant with those of Dewey and Makiguchi?

This chapter describes the study's research methodology. It particularly addresses the following areas: (a) rationale for research (b) research site, (c) research participants, (d) reflexivity and the role of the researchers, (e) data collection methods, (f) methods of data analysis and synthesis, (g) issues of trustworthiness, and (h) limitations.

Rationale for Research Approach

This research aimed to explore the real-life experiences of Latina teachers within the classroom to understand how accountability measures have shaped their understanding of the purpose of education, pedagogical practices and curriculum. This research assumed that personal identity, particularly culture, race, ethnicity, and class are implicated in the professional practices

of teaching that either challenge or help to replicate inequalities found in education today. Therefore, I used qualitative research which values the subjectivity and complexity of the human experience (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). As a mode of inquiry, qualitative research holds different assumptions about the human condition and the social world that quantitative research simply cannot capture. Qualitative research brings us closer to human beings and our everyday lives, allowing individuals to articulate their subjective lived experiences (Feagin, Orum, & Sjoberg, 1991; Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

A single instrumental case study design was used for this research. Six Latina teachers who work within the Midwest Charter Network comprise the case to understand the context of educational policies under accountability measures. As an exploratory form of inquiry, a case study helps to reveal the essence of the single bound social phenomenon at hand within a real-life, contemporary context or setting (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Feagin, Orum, & Sjoberg, 1991).

Interviews were selected as the primary source of data collection within this study because they have the unique ability to provide an in-depth picture of a participant's "deep inner meanings, selves, and sentiments," by allowing participants to expound upon their experiences, feelings, and the social world (Gubrium & Holstein, 2012, p. 31; see also Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). An advantage of interviews is the close interaction between the researcher and participant, which may lead to the sharing of their stories, views of reality, and explicate personal experiences and truths regarding matters in question, thereby enabling researchers to unearth and collect data to understand the issue under study (Crabtree & Miller, 1999).

Research Site

The Midwest Charter Network was used as the site under study. This is a pseudonym for a network of charter schools found within the Midwest region of the United States. This case study is bound to that charter school network because (a) research shows that charter schools are a proxy to neoliberal education (Cucchiara, 2013; Lipman, 2013), and (b) the student population consists of 98% minority and 89% of low-income students (Midwest Charter Network, 2020). This network opened in 1999 and began expanding in 2006. Currently, there are eighteen schools within the network that include one primary school and seventeen secondary schools (Midwest Charter Network, 2020). The current demographic of students served within the Midwest Charter Network include 49% African American, 48% Hispanic, 1% White, and 2% other. 90% of those students come from low-income households (Illinois Network of Charter Schools, 2020).

This study was bound to this particular charter network because this network serves Latino and African American low-income students. Charter schools are considered a proxy to the neoliberal accountability movement as they are privatized institutions that receive accreditation based on their performance on test scores. Accountability measures used to achieve high test scores have been found within these institutions and have been known to affect curriculum and pedagogy (Carter & Lochte, 2017; Connel, 2013; Darling-Hammond, 2004; Hunter & Bartee, 2003; Levinson, 2012; & Taubman, 2009).

Research Participants

Participants included a purposive sample (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016), specifically criterion-based sampling (Ravitch & Carl, 2016), of six Latina teachers from the Midwest Charter Network. Purposeful sampling, a method typical of case studies, is a key dimension of qualitative inquiry as it allows for rich information in the particular phenomenon under

investigation (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016; Creswell & Poth, 2018). Inclusion criteria for participants included Latino self-identification and employment as a teacher in the Midwest Charter Network. A verbal or email screening took place to determine participant eligibility. While this study was open to males, access to and availability of Latino teachers was limited, resulting in only females constituting the sample of participants. This speaks to demographic shifts in public school teachers with females dominating the profession in primary and secondary education (Wong, 2019). According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (2018) female teachers made up 89% and 64% respectively during the 2015-2016 school year. Of that, only 9% were Latino/a, further limiting access to Latino male teachers (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2018). While not done intentionally, this resulted in a gap within this body of research and potentially indicates a greater need for more Latino males within the teaching profession.

Teachers who met the criteria included those who taught various subject areas with varying years of experience. To protect teacher participants' anonymity, I used pseudonyms.

Table 1: *Participant's Name, Discipline, Grade Level, Years of Teaching Experience, and Self-Identified Ethnicity*

Name (Pseudonym)	Discipline	Grade Level	Years of Teaching Experience	Self-Identified Ethnicity
Lillian	Math	11 – 12	8	Puerto Rican / Polish (Latina)
Celia	English / Multicultural Literature	10	5 (also attended the network as a high school student)	Puerto Rican (Latina)
Frida	ESL (not a formally established program)	9 – 12	10 (also attended the network as a high school student)	Mexican (Latina)

Sandra	English / Multicultural Literature	10	8	Mexican American (Latina)
Gloria	College Counselor	12	1	Mexican/ Chicana/Mexicana (Latina)
Jennifer	Math	7 – 8	9	Mexican American (Latina / Hispanic)

I had a personal connection with most of these participants and were therefore identified in that way. As a former teacher within the network in two different schools, I worked with two of these teachers. I met two other teachers during my time there in our network data analysis days. I kept in touch with these teachers since leaving the network. I was informally recommended to the other two teachers by other faculty because they were Latina teachers. Once these teachers were identified, I contacted them via email to invite participation and to disclose the purpose of the study. If participants expressed interest, a follow-up email was sent to provide the consent form with more details of the research, and to set up a convenient date, time, and meeting location. Once a date, time, and location were established, we met for the interview.

Reflexivity: Role of the Researcher

As presented in chapter 1, I offer my positionality as a way to make my research position explicit and to engage in self-understanding about the biases, values and experiences I bring to this qualitative study. My six-year experience in the Midwest Charter Network guided my decision to embark in this research. The similar experiences and backgrounds I share with these participants, including being a teacher, Latina, and female, impacted my choice to use interviews as the primary source of data collection and authentic documents as a way to triangulate the data.

My entanglement undoubtedly impacted emerging understandings as the study progressed, particularly during the data collection process. In interviews, I often found I did not

have to ask follow-up questions regarding the network specific jargon, discourse, culture, or the roles of teachers and students. This allowed my participants to share fluidly, without disruption, or reduced a need for clarification on personal meaning. I noticed this during my interview with Gloria, when she mentioned wanting students to get accepted into colleges with high graduation rates. I did not have to follow-up with questions for clarification, because my personal experiences in the network meant I had a common understanding of discourses on such topics. Students that enter into colleges with high graduation rates are generally considered more prestigious and better schools, and students are more likely to graduate from those schools because those colleges offer supports and resources that increase graduation rates. My own experiences undoubtedly shaped the findings, conclusions, and interpretations drawn in this study.

Data Collection Methods

Data collection within this case study consisted of multiple data sources including interviews with six participants and the use of authentic documents. Semi-structured interviews were conducted for each participant. Each interview was approximately 60 minutes and was audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. Prior to each interview, I explained and gained consent from participants. This consisted of providing them with a consent form and reviewing its content for clarification. Participants then signed the consent form and were given a personal copy for their records. After, I began my audio-recorder, the interview began. All participants were asked general background questions and then questions pertaining to each research question using an interview guide (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Questions centered on participants' experiences, opinions, values, feelings, knowledge, background, and demographics (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The semi-structured format was used because it offered me flexibility to approach

participants differently while still covering the same areas of data collection (Noor, 2008). This questioning style allowed for organization within the interviews, but also versatility as each interview was able to follow a unique and customized conversational path (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Often, while teachers elaborated their answer for one question, they also answered other questions. This format also allowed me to probe for more information and clarification of answers, follow-up questions based on participant´s responses, the ability to change word choice based for each question and thereby acknowledging that word meaning changes according to each participant, an opportunity to explore inconsistencies in personal accounts, and to gain more complete information when needed (Barriball & While, 1994).

Data collection also consisted of relevant, contextual, and naturally occurring documents within the Midwest Charter Network (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). These archival documents were already-existing or naturally occurring documents produced in the course of everyday events, independent of my study (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). These archival data consisted primarily of official documents that were developed, produced and disseminated by the Midwest Charter Network. Documents used within this study include an unpublished training manual, student parent handbook, mission and history statement, national statistics data, national charter school demographic data, Midwest network of charter school data, a public blog, and Midwest Charter School website. Overall, the inclusion of these documents offered data-rich information for confirming insights gained through interviews and helped to corroborate and develop more complex understandings by illuminating an in-depth picture of the topics under investigation (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016).

Data Analysis Methods

This study used thematic analysis for identifying and analyzing patterns of meaning within datasets (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Braun and Clarke (2012) find this method of analysis allows a "researcher to see and make sense of collective or shared meanings and experiences (p. 57). Analysis of interviews and documents involved a review and familiarizing myself with the data. I immersed myself in the data to look for meaning and patterns by repeated "readings" of interviews and documents (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 80). Interviews were listened to at least three times in their entirety, each time notes were taken for various codes that emerged. The first listen took place prior to transcription, during transcription, and then during the data analysis phase. Active reading took place at least three times including during the research and writing of the literature review, before the coding process, and again after themes began to emerge. Notes were taken for both interviews and documents. Interview notes consisted of an excel spreadsheet which listed emerging codes with various quotes that represented these codes and were highlighted with different colors that signified various codes. Documents were printed and annotated with notes and highlighted with different colors that signified various codes and were added to the spreadsheet with interview notes. Document analysis acted as a method to cross-validate information gathered from interviews while also providing a guideline of inquiry during interviews (Noor, 2008). The use of naturally occurring sources of knowledge added a level of significance to the empirical analysis, and as a way to reconstruct the meaning that underlies and is implied within interviews (Nohl, 2010).

The verbatim transcription of the audio recorded interviews took place. Each audio file was uploaded into a secured online program where digital artificial intelligence was used to transcribe interviews. Because the initial digital transcription was not fully accurate, I edited

each transcription for full verbatim accuracy. Once full transcription took place, I was able to export the file into a Microsoft Word document for the purposes of reading the transcript in its entirety multiple times, coding, and further analysis.

Coding, or "the process of assigning meaning to data," began during multiple readings of documents, and continued during transcription, while listening to interviews, and in reading transcripts (Ravitch & Carl, 2016, p. 248). As part of a larger analytic process, coding of the data was part of the sense-making process of creating, defining, and refining codes and the generation of categories. Coding began with written notes, often noting the gist of a paragraph, idea, or text in one or two words. As common codes began to emerge, highlighters were used to begin to identify patterns. Throughout the coding process, each code was entered into an Excel spreadsheet with quotes from documents and interviews and were also highlighted to signify common patterns. Questions such as what connections were experienced among participants?, how do participants understand and explain their experiences?, were there any surprises learned during interviews or in analyzing documents?, were there any confirmations or consistency of previous instincts or within the literature?, or were there any divergences from literature? helped to guide coding and analysis (Dilley, 2004). This data organization of analytical ideas was the first layer of analysis.

After the first-level coding, pattern coding succeeded. This was a form of category clustering which entailed sorting through codes that came together into potential themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Themes acted as repositories for my data as they were used to situate "sets of construction or concepts in relation to each other to make arguments and develop findings" (Ravitch & Carl, 2016, p. 250). This thematic clustering looked for patterns, trends, and issues of importance and interest that emerged within the findings and were drawn out into themes. To do

this, I printed each code from the spreadsheet, cut them out, and began to organize and reorganize them into theme piles to form a theme map. This process was first completed for interviews to clarify the connections between themes. As a way to triangulated the data, I repeated the process using the document analysis.

While the research questions and goals, literature research, specific knowledge of institutional conditions, and social patterns were used as a way to develop these themes and communicate the essence of the data, I also used the theoretical frameworks of John Dewey, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, and critical theory to inform potential themes found within the data. While these frameworks offered categorical themes, I was also flexible and open to the unexpected analytical direction that emerged. This is important because although I came to the data with particular perspectives and assumptions, I tried to make sure I did not approach the data with a set of hypotheses that I wanted to prove or disprove, but rather kept an open mind to the data collected and the significant themes that emerged.

Theme development, therefore, took place both inductively, or bottom up, and deductively, or top-down (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The initial categories were conducted inductively, where I used repeated codes in the data to develop patterns and themes that emerged, taken directly from interviews and documents. When I went back to the data, I coded deductively by using the theoretical framework in my literature which included critical theory, John Dewey's Democratic Education, and Tsunesaburo Makiguchi's Value-Creating Education. Therefore, the process of analysis was both inductive and deductive and helped to triangulate the data, looking for both convergences and divergences.

Dialogic analysis or collaborative analyzing also took place between myself and my academic advisor throughout the data analysis process. This dialogic engagement was a joint

effort to produce a deeper understanding. The incorporation of multiple perspectives led to greater reflexivity and challenged my initial interpretations, helped me to generate a richer and complex data analysis. Dialogue also encouraged scrutiny and complexity within my findings (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). In summary, as I looked at the raw data, there was an ongoing analysis and refinement of what became my final thematic schema.

The themes are presented in chapter 4 of this dissertation. Seven different themes initially emerged, however the analysis process revealed that sub-themes were able to be made under two larger themes. The first theme presented is teacher identity. Under this theme a sub-theme that emerged is conflict, reflection, and changes in identity formation. These themes help to answer how identity is implicated in the teaching process. The second theme presented is the purpose of education. This theme helps to answer whether teachers show a common epistemological iteration resonant in the educational philosophies of John Dewey and Tsunesaburo Makiguchi. The third theme is a positive experience in the Midwest Charter Network. This theme helps to answer how teachers describe their experiences teaching in a charter school in the context of neoliberal accountability politics. The fourth theme is accountability in curriculum and pedagogy. Under this theme a sub-theme that emerged is discipline. These help to understand how these teachers describe their experiences teaching in a charter school in the context of neoliberal accountability politics. The fifth theme that emerged is the student-teacher relationship. This theme helps to understand how these teachers describe their experiences teaching in a charter school in the context of neoliberal accountability politics, how their identity is implicated in the teaching process, and provides a vivid example of how these six teachers subscribe to the educational philosophies resonant with those of Dewey and Makiguchi. The analysis of the findings relative to the research questions are presented in chapter five.

Trustworthiness

Within qualitative research validity should "align with the research questions, goals, and contexts" of the study (Ravitch & Carl, 2016, p. 188). Credibility within this study was established through triangulation. In a case study, triangulation adds "rigor, breadth, and depth to the study and provides corroborative evidence of the data obtained" (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016, p. 46). Triangulation is the method by which researchers "make use of multiple and different sources and methods" (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016, p. 46) to "challenge and or confirm a point or set of interpretations" (Ravitch & Carl, 2016, p. 195). Creswell and Miller (2000, p. 126) see triangulation as an effort to seek "convergences among multiple and different sources of information to form themes or categories in a study" (as cited in Ravitch & Carl, 2016, p. 195). I used both interviews and documents as a way to seek these convergences throughout the analysis process while understanding that these sources of data collection potentially offered differing perspectives that further answer the research questions.

Qualitative research seeks to use "descriptive, context-relevant statements" and rich descriptions to understand the cases' complexity (Ravitch & Carl, 2016, p. 189), and for the purposes of transferability, not generalizability (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). This is in an effort to analyze how findings are applicable to a broader context or in what ways the knowledge gained from a study can be applied in similar contexts and settings (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). Having detailed or thick descriptions, is how this was carried out (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Dependability was established by using the data to answer the questions posed. According to Miles et al. (2014, p. 311), confirmability is the "relative neutrality and reasonable freedom from unacknowledged researcher biases – at the minimum, explicitness about the inevitable biases that exist" (as cited in Ravitch & Carl, 2016, p. 189). Acknowledgement of subjectivity within this

study was made, however confirmability was also established through triangulation, the researcher's reflexivity, and external audits, including a critical peer reviewer and the dialogic engagement of my doctoral advisor and professor.

Limitations

Limitations are weaknesses that exist within a study that potentially affect outcomes. One such limitation within this research is the sample of participants. Despite my efforts to include both males and females, only Latina teachers participated in this study as interview participants. Not having the perspectives of Latino males may restrict the scope of this study. The findings of this study may therefore not be applicable to a broader context, setting, or group of individuals relevant to males. Because women dominate the teaching profession, however, findings from this study may be particularly relevant to women who serve in such settings. Transferability, however, is still possible within a similar context, setting, or group.

Another potential limitation within this research is the use of one 60-minute interview per participant. Because I had similar experiences and have a similar background to the participants I interviewed, I felt that only one interview was needed. Working within the network for six years means I was able to understand both implicit and explicit ideas shared, and was able to ask participants questions knowing they would be open in sharing their perspectives. Interviews were the best ways to understand their personal and professional experiences. This shared understanding of the network, culture, and my relationship with participants allowed me to establish trust with them.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of this multisite instrumental case study of six Latina teachers within the Midwest Charter Network is to explore how they articulate their own ideals regarding the purpose of education, their educational philosophies, pedagogical practices, and formation of curricula under the pressures of the accountability movement. In conjunction with this, I also seek to understand how their personal race, ethnicity, culture, and overall identity are implicated in their perspectives. I believe a better understanding of these phenomena will help to understand the role of teacher identity in the context of neoliberal education. Four research questions framed this study: (1.) When thinking about education under the effects of neoliberal politics, how do Latina teachers who work in a charter school conceive the purpose of education? (2.) How do these teachers describe their experiences teaching in a charter school in the context of neoliberal accountability politics? (3.) How is their identity implicated in the teaching process? (4.) Do these teachers subscribe to educational philosophies resonant with those of Dewey and Makiguchi? This chapter presents the key findings obtained from six in-depth interviews as well as document analysis. Five major findings emerged from this study:

1. All six teachers' racial, ethnic, and gender identities shape their educational practices and beliefs, including aspects of their philosophies of education, curricula, and pedagogy.
2. All six teachers characterize the purpose of education in social justice/equality terms that resonate with the philosophies of Dewey and Makiguchi,
3. All six teachers express having positive experiences working within the Midwest Charter Network.

4. Five of the six teachers express experiencing personal conflict with accountability measures within their curriculum, pedagogy, and experiences with students.
5. All six teachers place importance on the student-teacher relationship in the growth and learning process, particularly as it relates to living in an urban setting.

Following is a presentation of each finding with supporting excerpts from teacher interviews and related documents. My goal is to reveal the vivid experiences of the participants within this study. Rather than report the finding from the lowest to the highest frequency, I present the findings in a way that reveals the complexity and interrelationship of these themes. Quotes are used to illuminate the concept or theme being discussed. An explanation is further offered in order to provide context and interpret each quote.

Finding 1: Teacher Identity

The first theme found across all six participants is the significant role personal identity plays in the professional lives of these teachers. I sought to understand how identity is implicated in their teaching process. When asked about curriculum, pedagogy, or educational philosophies, these teachers incorporated who they are as a person, what they feel, or how experiences help to shape their understanding of these various topics. It is often difficult to distinguish or identify how identity is not implicated in the professional self within their perspectives. What is apparent is how issues pertaining to gender, race, ethnicity, class, and personally oppressive experiences are at the fore of their personal and professional selves and guides their practice. While identity is addressed in this section, findings reveal that, for the six participant teachers, their personal self and their professional self are inseparable and therefore, identity is implicated in all other findings within this study.

I also incorporate one subsection within this finding, entitled *Conflict, Reflection, and Changes in Identity Formation.* It illustrates how personal and professional identities are often in contention with one another. Through teachers' experiences and reflections, their identities often change, resulting in changes to their curriculum and pedagogy. All six teachers provide classroom-based narratives that demonstrate how their professional and personal identities are negotiated in such a way, but the two examples in this section provide a more in-depth unfolding of how their identity is shaped and reshaped throughout their teaching careers.

In the interview with Celia, she brings up being Latina several times. I asked her if that plays a role or influences her beliefs or practices in education. She said,

> *Yes. I think it's like the sole influence. I mean, going into college and going through my track for undergrad., learning how to be a teacher. I was in a room of like twenty-five other educators who were trying to be English teachers, and I was the only Latina. So, for me, I think that was the first time that I was ever confronted with the fact that people assumed that I was like the voice of all the Latinos in the world. And it was constant throughout my entire educational career. Like "what would a Latina, what would a Hispanic kid say about this?" "what's that?" or "what do you think that people in [your city] would say?" like, even being from an urban area. At first, I was really upset about it, because I was like this is so wrong, which it is. But I think I reflected and realized they are just ignorant because they've never experienced that. And maybe they're actually really trying to learn, but they're just going about it in a very ignorant way. So I think through that, a lot of the things that I did were based off teaching people about my culture. I think that registered when I became an actual teacher. I want to teach the kids about themselves and the things that they're going to face. I'm a very big feminist, and I*

talk a lot about feminism and women's rights. And we talk a lot about gender roles in my class. Maybe too much. I really push that on kids. And that's really a hard conversation because kids are coming from very traditional Latino or African-American households, where it's very like, this is what a woman does, this is what a man does. So, I want to push those ways of thinking for them. Not to go against their family or their traditions, but I want them to be able to recognize that there are some molds that are established innately versus them being the real molds of our society.

Celia's ethnicity and gender guide her educational practices and these are clearly integral to her identity. In this excerpt we see how her personal identity develops, changes, and is shaped and reshaped based on the contextual setting of her experience in college. Celia holds multiple I-positions, as Latina and being female, which play a role in her professional career.

Celia also describes how she implements the stories of others within her curriculum to demonstrate similarities among oppressed groups. While this excerpt helps to demonstrate how identity plays out in the classroom this also foreshadows a recurring theme found within all six participants' philosophy of education. Elements of social justice layer what participants believe is the purpose of education and helps to guide their practice. In this sense, Celia states:

I teach a whole unit about how the African-American civil rights movement and LGTBQ movement are basically one and the same. We talk about Bayard Rustin who was one of the top people in the circles of Martin Luther King Jr. and he was a gay African-American. He wrote an essay about Stonewall and how LGTBQ individuals are like the new, as he puts it in his essay, like the new Negroes. That really resonates with who I am, because I think it's really important for me as a person of color to learn things about other people of color and see the connections and see how we are in the same struggle, in

> *the same fight, but also for myself to be educated on how to talk to people. Because I don't know all the answers. And I also recognize that a lot of these ideas and passions that I have had didn't come from my parents because I came from more of a very traditional Latino household. So, I had to learn these thoughts versus like get them instilled in me. And I think that comes, I think our students, my students had that same household. That's kind of their same position. So, I want to provide them with those educational tools to allow them to think and question. Because I think it's really important to question. I want and kinda tying back to my philosophy, I want them to be active citizens in our society and part of being an active citizen is being educated and not just in the sense of I got a degree, like educated in what's going on on your block, what's going on in your neighborhood, your city, your country, your state. And then making your voice be heard and questioning things like, that's not OK. I'm going to go to this march, or I'm going to go vote, or I'm going to go call somebody, or I'm going to go sign up for this thing. And like make a difference. And so that's what I want my kids to do. And the things that they read is like, why is that? That was messed up when that happened. And I want to change this. Why did those things go on? Like, I want them to ask questions and seek those answers.*

Celia recognizes how her own sense of self is similar to that of other oppressed groups. By incorporating their stories, writings, and ideas, she aims to challenge or change her students' ways of thinking. Being a person of color, this is important to her and manifested in her curriculum vis-à-vis the skills she wants to teach her students. She hopes students recognize the identities of others to get them to question and act in support of marginalized communities.

In another example, when asked about her identity's influence in her classroom, Sandra references her personal experiences growing up. She was not represented in the culture she grew up in and this had a lasting impact in her desire to share her sense of self with her students,

> *Growing up we didn't, well I don't know about you, but I didn't really see myself reflected in TV shows or the movies that I watched and how meaningful it would have been. In that same way, being a teacher is essentially a position of power, and in many ways it can be abused. So, I think it's important for students to see themselves in that position, in leading the classroom. And yeah, I think it opens doors to the possibilities of what they feel they can be. And another thing is just like perspective, being able to share similar experiences to my students. I think that it informs my teaching and the relationships that I have with them. I think it also validates their experiences. And I think that's why multicultural literature was so important to me, because when I was in grad. school, I didn't read multicultural literature. So, the authority texts, they were like white men, you know, and so to be able to say yes this is also literature and your story is in these pages. I think that that's pretty empowering for students.*

From personal experience, Sandra understands the importance of having one's identity represented in different areas in one's life. Sandra both recognizes the identity of her students and her shared experiences with them. Like Celia, Sandra's content provides an avenue to expose students to others with a shared identity outside of "authority texts" that were written by "white men," and being in a "position of power" allows her to do this. When I asked Sandra what alternative authors she reads with her students she said "Sherman Alexi, Juno Diaz, Sandra Cisneros, which are my favorites, but so many more." The examples of Celia and Sandra are

examples of ways personal identity bleeds into their professional identity. These descriptions also tell us something greater: identity itself is reflected upon by these six teachers in integral ways, particularly the identity of their students.

These teachers are not simply or haphazardly imposing their own identities in the curriculum and pedagogical practices, their personal identities provide them with a lens to understand and change something about their students' lived experiences in the classroom. Living outside of the identities represented in mainstream education gives these teachers unique insight into the needs of their students, who like them fall outside the margins of a mainstream curriculum. Reflection upon identity itself is carefully and intentionally implemented into the curriculum for a particular set of students.

Implementation itself, the authority and power to change an experience for someone else also represents something greater for Sandra. She wants her students to understand they too have the ability to be "leaders" or in positions of power. This is echoed by other participants. These teachers want to be examples to their students. Beyond the classroom, some participants take on roles that further support students while also demonstrating a well-rounded ability to lead. Celia is extremely involved in the school community. She sponsors sports and clubs, which comes from personal interests and manifests into her professional self. Below, Celia describes how her personal experience leads to her involvement in programs that provide students with opportunities to further enrich their lives outside the classroom. This is her response when asked why she is so involved in the school community,

> *I think a few things. I love to be involved. And the second is I do think that everything that I do ties into who I am as a person. So, I became the basketball coach because I used to play basketball all my life, and I really wanted to coach one day, and then I coached, and*

> *I only stopped coaching because I started my graduate program. And I couldn't handle both of those at the same time. So that's when I stopped. I started the Girls Club, which is a women empowerment group because I had friends. I work at a STEM school, so I had friends that would go into college in a STEM career or trying to pursue some career. But they were the only Latina or Latinos or the only woman in their class and they would get discouraged and then would change their majors. And I just thought that was unfair. And so working in a STEM school that's primarily focused and driven on getting our graduates to pursue STEM majors and then working for a predominantly black, well teaching predominantly black and Latino students, I wanted to give women and help girls build their confidence now in those subjects, so we are able to build their confidence now in general, so that they're able to tackle those situations.*

Celia, by far, is the most involved participant in the school community. For confidentiality reasons, I cannot share the other roles she possesses, but these are positions of power and authority. Celia deliberately seeks out leadership roles where she is able to position herself in a place to bring about change in education for her students. The above excerpt also helps to show how her involvement in the school community stems from her personal identity.

Below, Gloria also explains how her personal identity flows from the common culture she shares with her students. She highlights speaking Spanish as a way to support students throughout the application process. For Gloria, speaking Spanish lends itself to parent interactions, the ability to form relationships with students, and the potential of being a role model,

> *I think it makes a positive impact. It makes a positive difference like for myself, for my students, and for even other families because they have someone who they can*

communicate with in Spanish and in English. So, they can ask questions, so they can feel comfortable saying "I don't know what this means. Actually, like my daughter, my son, my student, they tried to explain this to me but like also I still don't understand." I think a lot of times that opens up the door for me to say "here maybe your student still has a misconception about X topic and this is what this means. Or I can always have this relationship with parents and say what do you think is the best for my student. Or like this is how I feel about my student's college options. I think XYZ and being really open and transparent to that process because at the end of the day yeah students are going to college, and yes are in school, but I think parents also have to be really involved and even outside of my role, I do make parent phone calls and make those phone calls in Spanish and say "hey just checking in with you about your student, this, this, and this is happening." Or even hosting parent nights, specifically where it's only for Spanish speakers so I think it helps to bring more confident, secure, and knowledgeable sort of experiences for parents, and it gives empowerment to parents. I also like students to know that their parents are well aware of what's going on. And they're very well-involved in the college process. And that's something that wasn't true for myself. And I know that's something that's also not true for a lot of other parents. It's just having that language barrier. Again, well I guess I should have said it earlier, like me speaking Spanish, being bilingual is really, really important for me and my identity and to the work that I do and the population that I work with. So that's part of life, my identity, but also being a first-generation minority, being an only child, not necessarily like only being Mexicana or Chicana, but more in terms of my identity as a whole. Just being able to relate with students and say "hey I did it, so can you. Yes, it was hard, but if I did it, you can do it as

> *well." And I also know XY person who also did it. I know you can talk to them; you can ask them questions." So just having, just even saying that I know it's true, maybe my students do trust me that it's true, but even if it wasn't true like me saying that, it comes from someone they can trust. And I think it's hard to establish that overall. But sharing my identity with my students is something that definitely does help further create that relationship, that trust, but also that the knowledge that I'm sharing, what I know, because I mean well, and it's just in a way that I can't really be explained. It's sorta when you understand what you go through or what you went through or like similar cultural values as well. You know how to have conversations with students, like it's cultural competency. And you can't beat that.*

Here Gloria expresses how being bilingual means she is able to uniquely serve as a mediator between the school and parents to best support students' success in the college application process. In this case, a common language, which is intimately connected to her identity works as a cultural bind between herself and others. This deep and meaningful cultural understanding enables strong interpersonal connections between Gloria, her students, and her student's families. While Gloria does not speak of the complexity within the college application process, in her interview she recognizes that her role in the future of her student's lives is "high-stakes." Parental involvement is integral to the success of students to and through college and helping families make that transition is important for her. Speaking Spanish facilitates communication with parents who otherwise would not be involved and helps in relationship building. This also helps to build trust, not just between her and families, but between families and the school.

Language is also a critical cultural component for Frida, whose overall educational account is riddled with ties to her ethnic identity. Her work with English learners is intimately

connected to her personal identity. When asked about the ways in which being Latina affects her practice, Frida said:

> *I think it is important to everything that I'm teaching my students. I want them to understand who they are. And for me, I think discovering my identity, who I was. What does that mean? Taking into consideration my culture, my parents' history, helped me understand why I'm so, I guess, motivated to advocate for that specific population and to understand my purpose. Like you need to understand your history, where you came from, so that you can know what purpose you have in this life. And I tell my students when they come in freshman year, "you are going to change and see how you evolve till your senior year and understand where you come from." And I always tell them "respect your parents, you need to understand their story." I believe family culture is really important, it's sacred because that's who you are. It's who you are! It's like a tree. You come from a tree. You weren't just born. You came from something that has taken into account your mother's history, your father's history, your grandpa. All of that has made you who you are. So, you have to remember it.*

Frida's ethnic history is tied to her identity as a teacher. While helping students navigate the educational setting, she did not want them to lose that part of their identity. Frida's personal cultural history is deeply embedded in her identity and the role she's taken on as an ESL teacher within her school. Like her own, she believed their histories and cultural upbringing is important to who they are.

What we find in these accounts is a personalized and contextualized journey of learning and teaching. Identity, for these teachers, is formed over the course of their career – novice or experienced – and is mediated by a complex interplay of personal, professional, and political

dimensions (Mockler, 2011). While the competencies of being a teacher are developed differently, and are shaped by an individual's evolving perspectives and philosophies of teaching, these teachers have a shared experience pertinent to their ethnic and gender identities that permeate their professions.

Conflict, Reflection, and Changes in Identity Formation

Findings reveal that the six participating teachers regularly negotiate the cross between the personal and professional. Critical to professional teacher identity formation is reflection, which draws on one's own perceptions, beliefs, experiences, and practices. It allows teachers to develop and refine personal philosophies of teaching, and encourages one to "compare and contrast what they know from past experience with that which they are currently immersed" (Walkington, 2005, p. 60). Celia was asked to consider the choices she made in the classroom. She describes reflection as a critical component to her practice and growth that allows her to improve and develop as a teacher. The excerpt below provides an account of a particular interaction with a student during a whole-class discussion,

> *Sometimes, I'm so passionate in what I do that sometimes kids think that I have a wall, and I don't actually listen. So, there was this one time when we were doing a free write. It was a few years ago and this kid mentioned how his girlfriend was all moody because she was on her period. And I stopped him and I was like, "that's a wrong way of thinking. You can't just assume because a woman is on her menstrual cycle that that equates to all her emotions. That's wrong. I do understand why you're saying it. And I get what you're trying to say, but you can't say it like that." And I'm like "a better way to say it is, my girlfriend was just moody. Like that's it, just stop there," you know. Later on, I had kids do weekly reflections where kids write comments and tell where do they think they grew,*

what do they need work on, or any suggestions that they can give me. That week, some kids wrote down like you were really mean. That kid didn't even mean anything. In reality he unintentionally was saying something that was quote-unquote incorrect. And I was correcting him. But students were like, "you're just too much of a feminist and you can't see passed things." So, for me, I'm working on not jumping in and being like, "no, that's wrong." So, if a kid says something that's racist, I kind of let it stir a little bit to allow for kids to be "that was wrong" instead of me being like "that's wrong. No!" And that takes a lot of self-reflection and pause on my part.

In response to this, I asked "reflection?"

Really like reflection, reflection, reflection and I think reflection through like my personal, let me sit in bed and think about the day reflection. And pursuing higher education, like my masters and having those conversations and reading those articles and novels of study that put things in my head that make me even reflect further. Students' reactions when I speak up. Then I'm like, "oh, I shouldn't have. Yeah, let me take a step back." And then really, also it's like the biggest reflection, I think. I really think it's a reflection, but it's thinking about what is the intent with my correction? Is the intent to shut that kid down? Like, is it more valuable to shut him or her down and correct him versus helping that kid change their way of thinking or give them an idea that maybe questions their way of thinking? And so, in thinking about the intent of what I do, the purpose. The why. Why am I assigning this activity? Why am I asking this question? And so, I think with a lot of reflection through different avenues, that's really how I got there. I do think it's the best practice. I think the best practice is reflection, I think in the world of education, if you do not reflect on your practice, you will never get better.

Celia describes her personal changes in light of her interactions with students. The practice of reflection cuts across several different levels. Reflection is significant for Celia, not only as a personal practice to question and improve her pedagogy, but a practice that she encourages students to engage in. She immediately shut her student down when he said something that could be misconstrued as insensitive to women. Wanting him to walk away with a "better" way to express his ideas and an understanding that his comment could be deemed as sexist. In having students reflect, an intentional act geared at improvement, she listened to their concerns. They suggested that her personal identity as a feminist does not allow her to understand meanings they try to communicate. She describes changing this through her silence and allowing others, students, to "say" what she would previously want to say in her teacher role. This encourages critical thought and reflection on both student and teacher.

This interaction underscores how, for Celia, her teacher identity is also a site of self-transformation. Celia struggled to advance her philosophy of education and epistemological beliefs about the curriculum through her pedagogy. This goal was not met and negatively affected the student-teacher relationship. Through her inquiring stance and against her own philosophies, she engages in reflection and self-scrutiny in light of new experiences - that ultimately translate into a changed classroom. The negotiation of personal and professional subjectivities throughout the course of her career provides a base for challenging and changing her ideas about education. In this case, Celia's reflection on her professional experience changes her personal identity, which illuminates the complexity and process of teacher identity formation.

Similarly, in the excerpt below, Gloria makes visible her own reflection. The internal dialogue and inter-subjective exchange are complex. Initially, Gloria offers details about her

position, where students currently are in their roles as students, and the transitions they need to make. She also reflects on her role as a teacher by considering the kind of support students need in this context specific environment. Gloria also highlights the multiple identities students hold,

> *This year in the capacity that I've been working with students and also realizing that I'm also adapting or adopting a new teaching philosophy and what that looks like considering also the fact that I'm not teaching a core subject, and I'm working with students in such a different environment, such a different way, that really no one else has worked with them. What do I mean by that? I'm basically working with students, helping them to develop communication skills, self-advocacy, teaching them how to speak highly of themselves, and I'm not saying that students don't ever do that, but it's something that is practiced and it's something that you have to encourage and something you really have to push and you really have to learn that balance between helping and guiding students and hand-holding them. And it's really tricky because again that's also one of the biggest transitions that they're making from having like young students, young adults make their life transitions to become adults in their lives to make decisions, to be comfortable with the decisions that they make, and to be comfortable and confident knowing that they can be successful. So, it's tricky. With all that said, I do think that we do have to push our students to achieve what we know that they can and a lot of times it's really hard because there's just not enough support for students when it comes to personal or emotional or mental health. So, my philosophy is like you teach but you also provide some type of comfort and although we're not certified, although that's not our position, you give some type of emotional support, emotional therapy. Sometimes you just have to do that, you*

can't ignore that because a student is not just a student, that's not the only identity they carry with them. So that's something that always has to be addressed.

Gloria takes into account her limited experience in teaching (less than one year), the course she teaches (a collegiate seminar), her current beliefs in the purpose of education (to develop skills needed for social integration), the potential pedagogical practices she could implement to achieve what she wants for her students (pushing students, supporting them, "hand-holding" them through the process of learning, while also providing emotional support). She also considers the identity of her students beyond their simply being a student. In the above excerpt, we see her articulation of identity formation.

Gloria brings up the idea of hand-holding multiple times throughout the interview. This is a point of contention within her first year as a college counselor. While she believes that each student has different needs and therefore different supports should be offered, she struggles with what that looks like in the classroom, and how much support is too much support such that it becomes a potential detriment to student growth and in their transition out of high school.

I really just want to emphasize this is my perspective, and I've only been in it for a whole year. So, I think other people have many different perspectives. And I also think it's different because I don't teach a core subject class. But I feel like I have a lot of examples and I feel very strongly about this and not just about my students. That's just how I feel, that's a philosophy that I have in my life. I've just never seen it [hand-holding] work in my personal life. So, I'm just really, really, really skeptical about how it's going to look in my professional life. Cause I've never had to do this right, first-year teaching full-time, first-year teaching high schoolers, first-year doing college counseling, so the stakes are really high. But at the same time for example for me hand-holding would be like, I sent

> *you an email, I'm trying to communicate with you, and you just did not reply to my email, so now I need to come talk to you, you're still not being responsive, I'm asking you to do something, and you don't do it, and I kind of won't drop the ball until it gets done and ultimately if it comes down to it I'm going to pull you, I'm going to sit with you, and I'm going to do all these things that you could have, should have done on your own, and you didn't. We can do that and I think that's completely fair to a certain extent. We could do it for specific things. I don't know, I guess like higher-order skills or like it's just like again how are you going to make the transition to make those decisions for yourself? And some students do that for themselves. And some students do that after they graduate, I'm assuming. But then again which of the students are we harming when we do that kind of thing? Because it's unrealistic. And again, maybe it's different because we don't all have the same type of support outside of school. Like we don't have the same type of family support. It doesn't translate to what we have in school maybe. So how are students able to make that change? And I feel like it's a big cultural shock, in that sense too. Not necessarily the culture of a person, but the culture of an environment [college or the work-place].*

Here, Gloria moves back and forth in her understanding of what pedagogical practice is best for students. While wanting individuals to succeed and move forward in their lives, she describes being "skeptical" about the use of "hand-holding" as a support within her profession because it never worked in her own life. This is guided by her own experiences in college as well as by her personal experience in the world. This internal dialogue highlights the conflict and interaction of the personal and professional self, which causes her to reflect and question in light of her own experiences. Gloria acts - pedagogically - by "not dropping the ball" in light of what "needs" to

be accomplished within the realm of college counseling, but is uncertain of the potential positive outcomes this will have in preparing students for postsecondary success. This example illustrates how, for Gloria, the formation of her teacher identity is complex. It also illustrates how her personal and professional selves shape her teaching, interactions with students, and overall understanding of education.

Theorizing identity sheds light onto teachers' own internal and institutional dilemmas (Mayes, Montero, & Maile Cutri, 2004). Hermans and Hermans-Jansen (2001) assert that the I in one position can "agree, disagree, understand, misunderstand, oppose, contradict, question, challenge, and even ridicule the I in another position" (...as cited in Akkerman & Meijer, 2011. p. 4). These, often conflicting subjectivities may be a continuing site of struggle when trying to advance differing epistemological beliefs about curriculum, pedagogy, one's personal philosophy of education, and student-teacher relationships. While the self can be a site of resistance and self-transformation, challenging ideas that one holds dear is not always comfortable. These excerpts help to demonstrate how the three teachers' personal identities are implicated in their professional teacher identities. Their subjectivities as teachers shape student interactions, professional development, identity formation, the curriculum, pedagogy, and epistemological understandings of education.

Finding 2: The Purpose of Education

Regarding the six teachers' philosophy of education, all of them share common epistemological perspectives resonant with John Dewey and Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, even if not expressed or articulated in the same ways as these philosophers. These include taking on a humanist approach to education (Frida and Gloria), seeing education as the place where students

engage in the process of self-actualization (Frida, Lillian, and Gloria), education as the place where curiosity and personal interests are cultivated (Frida, Lillian, Gloria, Sandra, and Celia), education as a way to improve the lives of students and social experiences (Gloria, Sandra, Celia, and Jennifer), and education as serving a broader social good (Frida, Gloria, Celia, and Jennifer). These participants believe teachers are in a position to positively change the lives of their students and did what they believed was best in this attempt. Their curriculum and pedagogy centered on achieving these goals, even in light of obstacles presented by accountability measures.

I begin with Frida's philosophy of education. Frida acknowledges how one's ideas about what education is or could be is always evolving.

> *I think my personal philosophy is always changing, always evolving. I think right now it's always been to give back, to always make sure that I'm giving back not only as far as content, but like my experience, my knowledge to my students, making sure not only are they learning as students, but just as human beings, like giving them life lessons, especially with my advisory. I make sure that I'm transparent with them on things that they go through on a day to day basis, but making sure that they come out of school, being responsible and successful. And by successful, what I mean is that they're happy. They're happy with the options that they have and with the choices that they've made in the things that they pursued. And that's what I always tell them. Yes, we're very focused on grades and GPA and making sure we go to college. But I also understand that's not, that's one option, and your GPA is just a number, it doesn't define you. That's what life is. Life is figuring out what your purpose is. And after high school, you're not going to figure out what your purpose is. You're not going to figure that out until like maybe after*

> *college, maybe not until your 30s, but you need to understand what choices you have, that you're not limited and that you do have purpose and worth.*

Frida said her parents always told her, "You should always give back to the community, you give back to your home, you give back to your family." Frida's life is a testament to that as she progresses in her career. She said,

> *my friends always tell me "Why do you want to do so much more?" They ask because I just started a doctorate program. "Why do you want to do so much more if you're always stressed or, you know, you're trying to juggle everything. Why can't you just settle for just being that?" And I'm like, "No, it's not for me." I want to do more so that my students and the people around me can have more. If I do more then that means I can give them more. And if I give them more then it's a cycle. And that's the only way I think our society, especially our community, is going to be successful.*

Frida was taught to "give back," and she does this in her role as a teacher. She wants her students to be happy and to find happiness in exploring their purpose in life, with the opportunities afforded to them, and with the choices they make. She does not want her students to feel limited by one path - college. Frida believes the purpose of education should be a process of inquiry and exploration for her students and by doing more in her life—like getting her doctorate—she will be able to offer more to her students in that process.

Lillian, too, expresses the role of education as helping students to develop their full capacity to choose their own paths in life. Rather than being limited to college, a route predetermined by society, where they might not see success, Lillian wants her students to be free to decide for themselves and this should be supported by education. Lillian said,

As a student when I was growing up, cause I grew up in the 80s and 90s, it [education] was to teach you skills that you could use to be in the workplace. You know whether it's for college, whether it's going into a trade –whether it's just working at Mc, you know skills. And those who were, you know, who had potential, then those students were shown more skills. But now as a teacher, I think the purpose of education, at least where I'm seeing it, Ok, [in our network] it is to get kids to college, and get our numbers. I want the purpose of education for students to realize who they are as an individual and not conform to what people think they need to be. Whether that is like "Ok, I don't really like math, so I'm not going to take an honors class because I need to keep my GPA up, but I just want to get out of high school so I can go cut hair. Whatever. I just want them to define themselves and not what people want them to be.

When asked if this is something she is able to implement she said,

So I'm all for community college, I'm all for trade school, but my first year there [at her school], I had students in my honor's class. Students who were in the honors classes who should not have been there. They could not do simple math, and I asked them why they were in there. And they were like, "we got pushed in here because of our ACT score." Now that's not like, ACT scores at least in my opinion sometimes don't relate, because like you can guess, you can substitute whatever. So I was like, "what do you want to do?" And the student was like "well I want to go to community college, but they are pushing me to apply to these other colleges." He said he just wanted to go into welding. Which is great! Ok, I encouraged them because there were multiple students. I'm like "just apply to a community college." I'm all for students going to community college, paying less, doing what they want, before they get to these 4-year universities where they are not

> *ready. Um, I got talked to by the college person and they were um, they didn't say it forthright, but basically, I shouldn't be promoting community college. So it just made me feel like well why not? What is so important about a 4-year university or what's at stake? And then I realized later that there's numbers tied into it and there's a bonus tied into it, and there's like all these things tied into college retention into a 4-year college. So luckily though they have shifted from a 4-year university to post-secondary options, but it was hard in the beginning promoting those things when I knew that going to a 4-year university is not what they want to do. They can't grow themselves there. It's just like you're setting them up to fail. So at [my school] my first year was hard because I couldn't let them be what they wanted to be. Now this year it's different with the juniors and seniors because now I'm able to say "Oh, you want to go to beauty school, go right ahead, it's fine."*

Lillian initially was unable to encourage students to pursue future paths that strayed away from what the school wanted for them. The school believed that the purpose of education was "to get kids to college, and get our numbers." Accountability measures were tied into her ability to encourage or discourage students from pursuing their desired paths. Due to changes within the school, particularly post-secondary options other than college, Lillian is now able to encourage students to pursue paths they choose.

Gloria, like Frida and Lillian, believed education should help develop students' capacity to self-actualize. Gloria, however, does not just see school's purpose as oriented toward the future of a student's life, or a place where one discovers different options for future living. She believes education's purpose is to help students discover their place in the world today - their

interest and passions. Although the natural outcome is a future pursuit, education, for Gloria, is "self-exploration," and what that means in relation to others. She said,

> *I definitely think education should be, it's like a starting point and a safe space. A safe space obviously like symbolically. We're not speaking about the school as a physical place. But education should be a starting place, a safe space. Where it is that you start to explore different interests that you may or may not have and hopefully that's going to inspire you to want to further know more things, do research on things, figure things out on your own, ask questions, decide what it is that you're passionate about, decide who you are as a person. I think it does help you to have more awareness of your surroundings, like your place in the world. I think it's definitely a place of like curiosity, interest, and growth. And I feel like I don't think that education, well it could help close the generational, socioeconomic gaps, but at the same time in the broader sense of education like what it's for, I think it should be a place of self-exploration too. But again, in terms of like who you are, to yourself, to your family, to your community, but also what that means for you. So, like try to make sense, try to find the meaning behind that and behind what you do and what you're interested in. And also ultimately find something you're passionate about and being able to dedicate yourself to further that field, whatever that field may be.*

Gloria further articulates what she wants students to "take away from her class":

> *Self-advocacy. Knowing that, yes, you have support, but knowing when to ask for support, and knowing that you want to give this a shot. You wanna give it a try. If you fail, it's fine, it's ok. You could just get right back up and do it again, try it again. Knowing that they probably do come from families that probably face a lot of adversity in*

their lives. And we don't always remember that, we also don't always remember how great we really are and how capable we are. And just knowing and realizing that we are special, and it's not a cliché, who we are. And I think we don't ever, as a society we don't ever take enough time to make people feel like it's true, but it's true. There's something that really makes each of us unique and we all have different gifts that we can use in different ways. And just again reiterating that we are capable of achieving whatever it is we want to. To always push back when they feel like maybe a person in society or the system is just making them feel like they're wrong or that they can't accomplish some things.

Gloria sees the human potential in her students. She wants them to realize they are "great," "special," "unique," and "capable of achieving" whatever it is they want and that, although that process might be difficult, it is possible. In that process, she wants students to have the confidence to try even if they see failure, and to learn to advocate for themselves. Gloria further states the following about the potential of education:

I think overall in history, I don't think funding for education, recognition of teachers, of staff who work at schools, recognition of students themselves. I don't think we've been given like a human, like a really, really human perspective of what it means to be a student, what it means to be a person, what it means to be a teacher, or staff at a school. A lot of the decisions that are made, are made by people who are not in the school system or who maybe were in the school systems at some point, but have totally completely forgotten what it was like to be part of for example like a charter school, or a [public school]. And that applies obviously across the board in the U.S., but also in other countries, right. I think safety is important too. There's just not enough funding, not

> *enough recognition, not enough real human connection, not a lot of genuine interest in making education accessible to all. Because accessibility means very many different things for people, like I know students with IEPs or special needs or learning disabilities don't always get the attention and the services that they deserve. It's sort of like always about what's on paper, it's always about how much funding is the school going to get. But really, it should always be about how can I best be of service to my students and how can I best support my students to have a more equitable education to any other student?*

After considering what education can or should be, Gloria reflects on the reality of education and its limitations. She believes education as a whole is missing a real "human" element. Decisions about education are made by those outside of that experience and a lack of understanding of real human needs within the context of education today makes it so resources and supports are not put in place where needed. This, according to Gloria, leads to an inequitable experience.

While Gloria glosses over the potential of education to "help close the generational, socioeconomic gaps," she touches on issues of inequalities that students face. This element of social justice also saturates the educational philosophies of Sandra, Celia, and Jennifer. The real-life experiences of inequalities shape what they believe the purpose of education should provide. Sandra describes her philosophy of education as,

> *My perspective is based on urban education. I believe that we who serve, in urban settings, are tasked with the responsibility of exposing our kids to all challenges that are comparable to what students in wealthier school districts are exposed to but providing them with the right supports and scaffolds to access them and experience success.*

When asked why she believes this she describes the following experience in Los Angeles,

So, what really informed or had a huge impact on me was when I was in L.A. I did a shadow day. I observed a school. I don't remember what it's called but basically it was a neighborhood like Beverly Hills. I walked in a sophomore class and this teacher was reading out the thesis statements that students wrote and they were beautifully done and they were talking about Shakespeare at this very high level. Then I walked into a freshman class and you see kids on their laptops but like still engaging in conversation with a teacher. And I don't know, there was a lot of freedom and also just high-level thinking happening. It was almost heartbreaking in that I recognized that kids only have that amount of freedom like having their cell phones and their laptop out, I think they have that level of freedom because whatever foundation they had as kids. So, for example, if you were growing up in a home where your parents read to you every night and you're being provided with these educational experiences outside of the school day whether it be your family travels or they take you to, you know, museums and such, you are probably more likely to develop this like intrinsic love of learning and it made me really sad going back to this charter school where kids have to wear uniforms and can't have their cell phones.

Sandra reflects on how the cultural and socioeconomic upbringing of a student affects his or her academic abilities within the classroom. She describes the students who sit in a wealthy "Beverly Hills" like classroom as being able to engage in "high-level" thinking while also experiencing "freedoms," and she contrasts this to students within the Midwest Charter Network who do not have these experiences because they did not have an upbringing that cultivated an "intrinsic love of learning."

In continuing to think through her observation, Sandra recognizes the role of family, previous education, and outside experiences that lead to success in the classroom. If students are not exposed to this early on, they are at a disadvantage. She, however, describes what she is able to "control" to provide her students with a similar experience to those in the more affluent neighborhood of Los Angeles. The curriculum, for Sandra, is key:

> *I think part of it is just the fact that we're still in high school in the senior level trying to teach kids a love of learning. If they didn't have those foundations as babies you know, we're playing catch up. We just need to make sure that you're in your seat and listening and receiving this information before you can even be that free-thinker with that much freedom essentially. And it's really sad and it's scary because it's like that's something that, that's the gap that we can't fill right. That this kid is in the 10th grade and he can be creating something on his laptop while he's talking about Shakespeare with his teacher or like The Odyssey or something. But all I can do is make sure that this kid is learning about The Odyssey. You know, but that part was very heartbreaking; that kind of gap. Because I think that's a gap that eventually leads to or is linked to leadership skills and creativity. I feel it's outside of my control, but what is within my control is the curriculum side. And so talking to the tenth grade teacher that I was very impressed by who was talking about Shakespeare, he said "what you don't know is that I've spent the last two months building context," and you know the light bulb! I know how to build context! He just kind of made it very possible, like the conversation is very possible because it's grounded in foundational teaching practices, like well you have to spend a month and a half building context in order for kids to be able to talk about Shakespeare like this. And so for me it was like what's most important is to be able to provide these challenging*

> *rigorous educational experiences for kids but not this is hard, throw it at them, now it's like the kids in Beverly Hills because it's hard. But I want them to ultimately be able to do this. I need to spend a month and a half building context on it or something, you know. I'm providing you with a smaller little experience for them so that one day they can do something like this. But to me whenever I feel like I'm falling short it's because I'm thinking about what's happening with that classroom on the other side of town. You know and like how important it is for me to maintain those high expectations because at the end of the day our students are going to be competing with that in the real world.*

Sandra's overall philosophy of education stems from inequalities seen in education in very visible ways. She adds,

> *I think the purpose of education is empowering or equipping students with skills and a mindset that they need to be able to access whatever lifestyle they want. Lifestyle I feel like might be too associated with socioeconomic status, but I think it's just, um, I hate saying door but to be able to unlock any door that they want to. So yeah pursue whatever interest they have.*

Visible inequalities help to shape Sandra's ideals of education's potential in one's life. The idea that education can provide students with more opportunities to live a life they choose is also echoed in Celia and Jennifer's philosophy of education.

Celia's philosophy of education resembles that of Gloria and Sandra. Celia first establishes that education should provide students with skills needed to contribute to a more just society via citizenship. Education should help provide students with skills that will help them in that pursuit. Like Sandra, Celia also looks to issues of race and societal inequalities to inform her philosophy. She wants her students to be "woke," or to have an awareness of racial

discrimination in society or other forms of injustices, and this centers on the identities of the students she serves. Celia begins,

> *I think it's [her philosophy] like ever-changing, for sure. In terms of my philosophy, I really want students, I think, I almost feel like my philosophy has changed into what education was supposed to quote-unquote be. Like when it was actually started. I want kids to leave being able to be productive citizens. That's what I want. And through that productivity of being a citizen, you have to know how to write. You have to know how to speak. And you have to know how to manage spaces in conversations that are probably things that you don't agree with. But you can respect someone's opinion and you can also present yours in a respectful manner, and be able to look someone in the eye and be able to be organized. And so I think it's everything that I want to teach and try to teach goes into that role. I also think it's important for me to have kids be "woke," and like especially teaching like black and brown kids, like I want them to go into the world and realize it's racist. I want them to go into the world and realize that it's going to try to push you down. But you've already gained all these skills to be successful. You just have to use them and not be like, don't feel demoted or deterred that this society's going to stop you from being successful. Because you actually know everything that everyone else does. It's just, you have to try harder.*

Jennifer's philosophy of education has similarities to that of Gloria, Sandra, and Celia. Jennifer sees great disparities in urban education. Her experience in the military allowed her to see different school systems, both as a teacher and as a mother whose kids were placed in different schools. She saw disparities in curriculum and student achievement. Our interview was held in a public library near her home, a wealthy suburb. She referenced her suburb multiple

times throughout the interview as a way to compare the advantaged education her own children have versus that of students in urban areas, particularly her students. Understanding that disparity is the very reason why she makes the significantly long commute to and from work. Unlike any other participant, however, Jennifer aligns her success as a teacher in closing that disparity with data provided on standardized testing. By knowing students' scores, she is able to tailor her curriculum to help them develop and grow. She expresses liking Common Core State Standards as she believes they were the answer to providing everyone in the United States with an equitable education.

> *My philosophy stems from this idea of equitable. I feel that kids in the suburbs have such a better education than kids in the city, and I don't think that's fair and that's why I travel every day to and from the city, you know, because I just want to make sure that they get the best possible life. If that just means me doing what I have to do in my class. It's just to provide those opportunities. Like literally having 60 minutes of education time. Like, here we go. This is the do now. This is this, you know, getting back results and seeing like, OK, this is what you got. This is what we have to work on. That to me is equitable. Somebody actually caring about your education like this is where you're at. This is where your tests tell you where you're at. This is where you have gaps. This is where we need to close. Now, it's my job to do this. That to me is equitable. Me caring about you, me doing what I've got to do as a teacher, not me as a teacher just showing up and being, "well, I'm here. Here's a worksheet."*

I then asked "Where do you think you got that from - your philosophy?" Her response,

> *What I saw was like, I have children of my own, right. And what I realized when I. So first of all, I was in the military. And so for 20 years, you know, my husband was in 20*

years. And so I just followed him a lot. And I saw all the different, because I go from state to state. I saw the different like levels of academics that we here in the United States provide and how disproportionate it is. It is so disproportionate, it's not even funny. So I came back from California to [the Midwest]. When I came back from California, I stepped into a seventh grade class. At this time, I was teaching at [a different Midwest charter school]. And it was. I could not believe what I was teaching these eighth graders. I was like this is what I teach in California, as a sixth and seventh grader and you guys are eighth graders. You're so far behind. And I wasn't even a teacher there, I was more like an assistant. And so it wasn't. It was definitely not a good fit for me, so I left needless to say. But it was this disproportion. And I settled here in [the Midwest], and I see what my children are learning. And I'm like, it's not fair to our kids in the city, it's not fair. They're not dumb. They're just as smart. They're just not given that opportunity. And so I felt like when I was given that opportunity, I ran with it. I tell them, I said, "I'm here to teach you. I'm here so you can expand your wings." I said, "I hope and pray that you will put yourself out there and look for a school that will give you diversity, cause what you see here is not what is out in the world." I said "and I need you to understand that, you know, so the only thing I can give you is your education, your knowledge, and with that is power."

Jennifer's experiences of difference and disparity in classrooms across the United States inform her ideas regarding the purpose of education. She wants the best for her students, so they are able to have more opportunities in their lives. Jennifer believes that the skills and "knowledge" she provides will allow them to expand their wings. Like Frida, Lillian, Celia, and Gloria, Jennifer also sees education as providing a future outcome for the good of the individual.

Finding 3: Positive Experiences in the Midwest Charter Network

The third finding that emerged across five of the six participants is a sentiment of positivity regarding their experience within the charter network. These five find different aspects of their work to be personally fulfilling including relationships with other teachers and with students, the support of administrators, the potential for growth and leadership in their professional careers, or freedom within the curriculum, which contributes to them working within a charter. While teachers experience general positivity within their schools, this does not cloud their ability to critique school culture or particular practices. This third finding helps to answer the question of how teachers describe their experiences teaching in a charter school in the context of neoliberal accountability politics.

As a first-year teacher, Gloria finds her school to provide a supportive environment in which she is able to grow and learn,

> *I find that the staff [within the school], everyone is really supportive and really just wants to help you be successful, help your students, really care about the future of our students. They're really passionate about what they do and what they teach. But also very passionate to be helpful to other teachers and help us grow. Specifically me, like me in my first year, I just know that I can always go to someone and I can always ask for help and I'll always be supported. What else? Yeah, I mean learning, like it's been such a huge learning curve. Like I think for example specifically my dean of instruction is always available to give feedback, is always available to ensure best practices, to come in and observe. So it's always a process of like giving something a try and seeing how that works, but also going back and debriefing – on how the lesson went, how that strategy that was implemented, how that worked, how it didn't work maybe and what can*

be improved the next time we do it. So I think it's a great place to be great at what you do, but also be great at learning in order to become better.

Gloria finds her school to be a supportive place in which colleagues help her to grow professionally. This is particularly important to her as she is still in her first year of teaching. Celia, too, appreciates the professional development while also having the autonomy in the classroom to help student growth.

It's a great school. The teachers are really motivated to ensure the growth of their students. And we have a lot of autonomy at our school. And there is trust that when you were hired, you were hired because you are qualified. So, I never feel like I'm not trusted to meet a group of people or students. And I think more now than ever it's like the push to have development throughout the school too. Like developing you as a professional.

Sandra too expresses her appreciation for the *"freedom to build my own curriculum."* She appreciates the supports the school provides around classroom management,

I think you need to learn how to manage a classroom without outside supports for it to work really well no matter where you go, but then to have that additional support like if someone's in trouble like it's not like you talk to their parents and that's as far as it goes. We have a lot of support in terms of structure or managing our classrooms. I feel that coming from a school in LA to here there was a new form of support that I was looking for. It's like OK, I had the curriculum down, but now how can I find some place that's really organized in terms of how they maintained school culture, so that I can actually deliver this curriculum. And it doesn't feel like I'm on an island. And where kids behave this way in my class and some way in a completely other class. To me that was important because at my old school, I had a lot of development in curriculum design and

> *it was really great, but it was always like in conflict with just making sure kids were paying attention you know, which they were, but in my class. Were they in science class? Were they in their math class? And if they weren't what does that mean for their entire education, if they can't have that like in every content? So that was something that I was looking forward to working [in the network], where everything, in an ideal world, is like consistent across the class. It's also a smaller school and it's younger. So, we're just in our 10th year and so it's very innovative and in that the idea of innovation that they're always willing to try new things. And if you are comfortable with that then I think it's very satisfying work. But if someone doesn't like a lot of change then it can be overwhelming. And you might feel like you're always reinventing the wheel.*

Culture surrounding classroom management not only helps Sandra to execute her curriculum, it provides consistency in all classes to help students learn and grow, which is something she did not have at her previous school. She also refers to the school as innovative which allows them to try new things when something does not work, and for her, this is satisfying. Below Sandra also offers insight into the support the school gives her as she transitions into a new identity as a mother,

> *It's made teaching sustainable for me. Like which is probably something that you don't hear but like I've gotten a lot of life flexibility especially now that I'm transitioning into motherhood, and I received a lot of support. You know if I need to come in late it's totally OK. I don't need to punch in and punch out you know. So that kind of thing has been really helpful and has been a pleasant surprise. And this is like a tiny thing but it's huge. You know by law they're required to offer a pumping area for pumping milk and the only thing by law they're required to give you is like an outlet to plug in your pump and like a*

> *fridge. Now there's a little [school] baby room. So, a few teachers and I came up with a wish list of a couch, a rug and stuff like that. And we asked them if they could clean up because the pump room was like the book room and it was dirty and dusty and hot so they painted a wall purple to make it a little homey, they put a rug and a couch and a little table and just kind of like made it homier. Like that was huge for me that they would just go out of their way to make it feel nicer you know. So, in that way I don't know if it's specifically a [my school] thing, but it's important and made teaching more sustainable for me.*

Sandra is appreciative of the school culture. Her new identity and role as a mother is strongly supported by the school, and she expresses that a charter school has that flexibility to do that where a district school may not.

When asked how do you like the school you're currently working in? Jennifer responded,

> *As a school? I, I'll be honest with you. I love it! My first year was hell. Any time you go to like, I feel like if you are new and you go to [the Midwest Network]. First of all, [the Midwest Network] is unlike any other institution. The work that you have to put in is unlike any other. However, once you get through that first year, it's like a walk in the park. For me at least it was, like my first year. I mean, it was hell. I mean, the kids will, you know, you don't know the rules, there's so many rules and so many policies. And these kids know it back and forth because they know about the demerits and merits. And you're not going to give me one, you know, and so they. And if you don't know that structure unfortunately, it is gonna be a big pushback, but once you're in there, these kids*

will love you forever and do whatever you want. And so I feel like that's at the stage I am in my life at [the Midwest Network], you know? So, yeah.

Jennifer expresses having struggled her first year due to the learning of a new school and culture. However, once she learned it, she was able to adapt. She expresses loving the school. Below Jennifer further describes her comfort with the use of data as a measure of her teaching. She easily uses the data to understand where she needs to focus her curriculum and pedagogy. This is what provides students the opportunity to better their lives. The higher the scores the higher likelihood they will get accepted into better colleges. Because she shapes her curriculum in such a way that allows students to be successful on tests, she has the full support of administration,

My administrator fully respects me and I feel like we're a school as long as you show up with the data, they will never say no to you. As long as your data says, "hey, you're doing exactly what we want you to," they will never say anything to you. You know, they will always support you. They'll give you whatever you need. But if your data, they're very data-driven, we're just data-driven, it's like whatever the data says, if it's good then you're good to go. Unfortunately, if your data doesn't represent what it now, they're like, OK, what are you doing? What do we need to put in place? Now they're going to be like that. You don't want nobody coming in your room, nobody knocking. Just do your job and do exactly like, you know, show the data and they'll leave you alone. And I think that's why I guess I've grown to love the school I love. Because they let me just do what I love to do. You know? And I just thank God my kids have shown up. Thank God! You know, they put in the effort. They put in the work. Yeah. Two years ago, my kids. We've never seen it like this, my kids did phenomenal. Phenomenal. Like I was just, oh my god,

these kids are just so smart. But it just warms your heart to know that they're going to go to a better school and they're going to have better opportunities because of this.

Jennifer and Sandra express a great deal of support from administrators. Although differently articulated, their shared appreciation illustrates that, for both, the support of a superior brings them job satisfaction.

Frida, more than any of the other participants, has been connected to the network the longest, spending close to 14 years of her life there, first as a student and then in various professional roles. She expresses gratitude for her time there and the opportunities she has as a result, but this does not cloud her ability to critique the educational needs of the network and the students. Her time allows her to see a growing need for resources for English as a Second Language (ESL) students and her changing roles make her feel the need to be their advocate. Frida, in fact, advocated for the ESL program, in 2014, prior to its existence which was put in place roughly a year after she expressed a need for it. This to her is "reassuring" as she sees that those students are "getting some support now," but their needs are not fully met with just the implementation of a single program. Frida said,

I think every year from there, I've just been trying to figure out what kind of other supports. What else do they [ESL students] need to be successful, to reach the content and to be as academically successful as their peers.

Her role gives her insight into the needs of these particular students. She saw that two of her classes graduated, but,

they didn't stay in college. They didn't finish some of them didn't finish the [first] semester. I have two students who are still in school. Some have left back to their home country, and many of them are just working. So, to me, that's a problem.

She observes,

> *It's like, yes, we're setting them up for success in applying to college. But what are we doing setting them up to be successful in college and post college? And if college is not the option, cause I actually don't believe college is for everyone. And that's kind of my disconnect with [the network] some times. We say that, yes, we do know that we want to give our students a life full of options, but I think it's always been focused on college. We don't have the resources for students where that's not their option. That's not what they want. They want to already start working or there's some students that just aren't meant for college and that's OK. But what are we doing to provide them with other resources so that they can be successful? I think that's what we're lacking right now as a network.*

In response to this observation, Frida further proposed elements of a "newcomers center" which she describes as a center for any students "who are arriving to the states, who need to learn English really quick, but also need other resources like a community agency." Newcomer students would get a "semester of intense instruction of English" which would help alleviate the pressures found in a regular classroom. The newcomer center would also "connect them with lawyers" to help them navigate immigration issues. She explains that these students primarily come from "Ecuador, El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, and Mexico, of course."

Working at her school with this population, makes her more aware of a necessity of resources for a specific population. Frida's observation of these needs is not so much an expression of her discontent with the network or the school where she works, but rather an observation of an area for improvement. Elements of her proposed "newcomer program" were seen in a "three-year plan" to further develop services for those students who may need it. She

thus feels heard and supported in the school where she works and has since been there for two years.

The above data suggests that five of the six participants each teach in the network for a reason. The reasons vary, but each found personal satisfaction within her school or her role. At the same time, the findings also suggest that these teachers also identify areas needing improvements. They also express changes that have happened within the network as a result of such critiques. This tension, however, does not prevent them from experiencing happiness in the workplace.

Finding 4: Accountability in Curriculum and Pedagogy

A recurring theme in my findings was the conflict teachers express in trying to execute their philosophy of education. This theme helps to understand how these teachers describe their experiences teaching in a charter school in the context of neoliberal accountability politics. All six teachers discussed the effects of accountability measures to varying degrees in their teaching experience. In the excerpts below, we find different ways in which teachers and students are affected by standardized testing. The ethos of the network centered on testing and students' scores, some schools within the network, however, tend to focus on this more than other schools. Important to note, this perception is shaped by a number of variables including one's philosophy of education, how much teachers value testing and students' scores, and the content area they teach. All participants, except Jennifer, express or acknowledge conflict with accountability measures in their personal practice or within their school.

Frida and Gloria question the value and role of testing in the classroom. Because their content areas, ESL and college counseling respectively, are not "tested" however, their curriculum is not fully implicated by accountability measures. Their observations are made with

some distance than those of other teachers in this study whose curriculum is directly implicated. Frida, however, expresses still having to "look" at the data and make sense of it to help support her students in different areas of the test. Sandra and Celia found that they previously struggled with accountability measures in their curriculum, however, with experience, they are able to implement a standards-based approach without sacrificing a democratic or value-creating curriculum. One teacher, Jennifer, finds value in testing. She sees it as a way to shape her curriculum and teaching in the classroom. More importantly, she recognizes that access to college leads to opportunities beyond college (e.g. more job options, higher income, access to resources, etc.) and further helps these students to achieve self-actualization. Lillian struggled to find value in testing. Throughout her interview, Lillian often made statements, like "I don't know if I should say this," "maybe this is wrong of me to say," "I'm just going to be blunt," "I don't know if this is bad of me to say," or "I'm just going to be honest." These comments center around issues of testing and discipline. While she touches on her own ability to push back on such measures, more than any participant, Lillian expresses the most contention and struggle with accountability measures.

Content area also implicates a teacher's perspective. Gloria labels teachers whose curriculum and practice is deeply impacted by tests as "core teachers." These teachers teach the four core subjects measured on standardized testing, including English, Math, Science, and Reading. In this study, Sandra, Celia, Lillian, and Jennifer are core teachers. I label Frida a periphery teacher because her subject is used to support the standardized growth of other subjects. I, too, was a periphery teacher while teaching World History. Through my content, I was responsible for teaching reading skills. Gloria is the only teacher in this study who does not have to incorporate test preparation into her curriculum, which she expresses. She, however, has

intimate knowledge of testing and test scores because her role as a college counselor is to help match students with appropriate colleges based on such a factor. Gloria, therefore, also offers insight into the effects high-stakes testing has on students' futures. She is able to see first-hand how test scores affect the trajectory of a student's life.

While talking about "hurdles" students face in school, Frida uses the role of testing to illuminate how it hinders students,

> *I think we need to steer away from so much testing. We've become a nation that's so focused on test scores where a number has been an indicator as to who a student is and what opportunities they're going to get. And that shouldn't be it. It shouldn't. I've known people in my past that have done horrible in school that were not the best students, and I've heard teachers tell them you're not going to get into this college, you shouldn't even apply, because they didn't do well in school, because they didn't get the best ACT score, or background and they went to that school and they graduated and they have a perfectly great career. And I've known students who also have failed high school, but at the same time are successful than the other students who were successful in school. So, I think we do have to change the way we believe we are teaching our students. We are teaching them to the test. I know schools say they don't, but they do. They are teaching to the test. And we're not teaching them basic skills that they should be learning after high school, like finances, like credit cards, things that they should be learning after high school and preparing them to be successful in college or whatever route they decide to take.*

She follows,

> *I know it's the higher ups that demand that we have certain requirements, certain standards we have to meet. And I hate it. Right after this interview, I have to do my data*

analysis today. We're so focused on data, so focused on data! And like right now, for the past year I've had a coach and I really don't know what she's coaching me in. Like we're looking at data that doesn't even pertain to me. Why am I looking? They have me looking at data for students who I don't even teach. And I'm like, "why would I even be looking at that?"

When I was in the network, the ELS program did not exist. I am, however, surprised to hear that Frida, too, is expected to support student learning within her capacity that helps to support students whose first language is not English. She concludes,

I think every teacher, we all know that that's the problem. And we all want to give them lessons that are not to the test. At the same time, like it's the higher up that demands that we have certain requirements, certain standards we have to meet.

When asked about her philosophy of education, Gloria believes it should help develop the human being and their capacity to learn more. However, when asked if her school is doing that she states,

I think it does the complete opposite. It builds some sort of pipeline or direction or path in order to be able to do that. Because nowadays, a lot of students have really negative experiences in schools. The discipline systems, the support and the attention that they get in the schools. Sometimes maybe what they need is counseling and not a disciplinary consequence. Like obviously again back to the original problem like there's not enough funding, there's not enough real human connection. So really there's no good way to foster that within the school systems. And obviously again that also looks very different, it's very complicated, but what I've known and in different places that I've been, there's just not enough people, not enough time, or not enough money to provide all those

services that we could be. But I just disagree with that. With that said, I think that a lot of the school systems again specifically, with the experience and the knowledge that I do have and having gone to a [public school] myself, not to say that only [this city's public schools] are having this kind of effect on students. But being in school is kind of discouraging because again when you need attention, when you need the class' attention, sometimes when stuff is happening, you get negative attention. It makes it so that students don't want to keep learning. A lot of times learning experiences for them are not fun or inclusive. Are not about developing their own learning. It's not about learning about their place in the world, learning about what they want to accomplish, what they can accomplish. It's more about objectives, how well can you do on this exam? And I don't, I strongly disagree that that's the way, that that's the purpose that education is supposed to serve. And I just think there is so much pressure for students to do well on exams. And have a perfect score, a perfect GPA. And they forget that a student, that a young person, that a toddler is so much more than just numbers, obviously, is so much more than test scores. It's like we really want to develop a person who is well-rounded, and taking exams and doing well in classes is not, that alone is not going to develop a person and that alone may be motivation for some but definitely not for all. And this is why we see such little retention in high schools, specifically I feel like for students of color.

Gloria focuses on the experiences of the students within accountability measures. She touches once again on a need to recognize the full individual and their needs and lack of resources that could help to develop that student. As an accountability measure some teachers bring up the importance of grade point average (GPA) as well as test scores. GPA is used as an accountability measure because along with a test score, it plays a deciding factor in college acceptance,

therefore teachers are held accountable in different ways for making sure students are always working toward improving their GPA. Gloria also talks about the negative experience students have that impact high school retention rates - particularly for "students of color," who are at a greater risk of dropping out than are other groups.

Celia, a "core" English teacher, also articulated her experience under accountability measures. She tells the story of what she hopes to do, "light and fluffy stuff," to engage students in the curriculum. Here, she also addresses broader top-down policies, the role of learning and growing as a teacher, confidence, understanding the current system she's under, and how experience allowed her to engage in resistance to structures put in place by accountability measures. When asked if there was something that prevented her from achieving what she believes is the purpose of education, Celia said,

> *I think the typical answer every educator will say is like thinking about teaching to the test. The test that you take at the end of the year in order to validate everything that you did, and did students grow? I think it's also just the routine of education, like we've done this for so many years, why would we want to try something else? And then I also think it's our society, our administration also hinders. Educators feel like they can't deter from their path because they have to meet a bunch of deadlines, like benchmarks, that their school, or district, or state, or city gives them.*

Celia provides an example in which she had a conversation with a superior of hers that reminded her of that goal,

> *There was one conversation that I had with a superior of mine and I was like "I want to do all these things. I want to do this; I want to do that." They were like, "those are great ideas, but remember you have to grow at the end of the year." So, he wasn't telling me*

straightforwardly, he wasn't saying "no." Instead of critiquing my suggestions on how I can improve my classroom or the ideas I had, he instead responded with "this is what you really have to do." And sometimes I think when teachers try things like, quote-unquote crazy ideas in their class, like increase engagement, or increase a different way of teaching, I think sometimes administration, because I'm sure there's pressure on them too, you know, from the other higher above, it's like, "remember, you have to do this. Remember, that's really your job. Like all that light and fluffy and wonderful stuff, that's great. But that other side like you have to grow 30 points this year. That's your real job." And I think that is held true for many teachers, not just in this network but as a whole.

When asked if she found it difficult to teach within this environment, Celia said

I think it's difficult in the sense that you have to prove yourself in order to be yourself. You have to prove that you are capable of doing your job and actually being an educator to be almost trusted to actually educate. And what I mean by that is, great, you hit 30 points of growth for two years, now you can do that stuff that you wanted to do for three years.

When asked if she was currently comfortable in providing students with the "light and fluffy" curriculum she previously described, Celia said:

I think now if I had that conversation [with her superior], well, that was in my second year of teaching when I had a conversation [where she was reminded of her need to grow 30 points on "the" test]. So, I think part of it is that fear of being a new teacher and being like I need this job or I don't want to let my boss down or maybe they know best or I'm just still learning. Now if I had that conversation, it would be like "that's what I'm going to do." Because I have a little bit more experience. I've seen five different classes

in front of me and I know what works. I know what doesn't work. I know how to adjust. And I also think I grew in my own personal confidence of risk. I'm confident that if I take this risk, it will pay off versus like in my first two years of teaching, I was really scared to take the risk because I didn't know if it would pay off. Where in my third and my fourth year of teaching I'm like, "yeah I'm going to do that." And it works or it didn't work, but I still was like, I'm glad I did that. And I'm glad I tried. And now I know what to tweak, where I think in the beginning of my career, you're so scared to do that because you're scared of failing or like fucking up the kids.

I asked Celia if she currently provides that "fluffy stuff" and she said:

I do. But I think at the same time, I've learned that you can't have, it's not like a trade-off. You know what I mean. And I think sometimes, maybe some people think that it is, and I don't. I understand that I still have a job to do and I think I am more invested in that job where I do have to grow 30 points. And that is my mission because I understand the opportunity, because I understand the game of education where you have to grow in order to get into college, which would hopefully open more opportunities in the future. I get that. But I also understand that I can do that at the same time like pushing a lot of social justice conversations and like reading all these things and pushing you to do this and have more group projects aligned with teaching you where to put a comma and what answer choice is the best. Where I think at the beginning of my career, I felt like I was doing more of the other and doing more of one and then it would hinder the other. I wasn't allowed to do the other. I do definitely think that that was part of the case. But now I can to the point that I said, I can justify myself. I can say yeah, we are doing that

group project, but here is how it connects to like these seven skills. And that's where it's like because people know that I can do my job. I'm allowed to do what I want to do.

Her articulation demonstrates personal and professional growth in her practice. It also illustrates how experience helped her to gain confidence in her abilities and ultimately helps her to push back against accountability measures while also incorporating them into her class. Celia said she understood the "game of education" and grew in her "personal confidence of risk." In order for her students to have the same opportunities as others, Celia understands that her students need to go to college, and she has to get them there while simultaneously wanting to provide them a critical education. Her ability to "take risks" in providing them with a democratic and value-creating pedagogy grew with experience.

Sandra, like Celia, expresses having to deal with accountability measures in her class. She expresses the conflict she feels in being able to provide students with the kind of education she would like to,

Yeah. It's like I think that testing is a huge challenge. We're torn between like I want to do this really creative thing, but I still have to answer to the test scores. So, like I'll be able to do part of it but then I need to figure out how to exactly align it to, you know, these test scores. So yeah definitely things like that. That's a conflict that interferes with what could be really great for kids.

When asked how much accountability measures affect her teaching, Sandra says,

I would say it guides it less and less every year. But I think it's because I know with experience, I've been able to shift my focus on if they can develop these reading skills, they will do fine on the tests. So, it's still aligned, but I know that getting that test score isn't like a bunch of practice tests, it's practicing like synthesizing in this level of difficult

> *text that you can still kind of like meet those test scores. You can still get those scores but it just takes experience and knowing the content so that you can say "they just need to practice these skills on this level of text and that will transfer over you know. I don't do any test prep, ever."*

Sandra faced personal conflict in the classroom, but this is less and less of a concern for her, because like Celia, her experience and learning as a teacher in being able to

> *navigate the test part but still stay true to these habits and this model of a classroom. I don't really necessarily feel that conflict of having to teach to the test, but I feel like if I were newer at this, I would, and I see colleagues that are new at this face that conflict.*

Below, Sandra explains what she means by her model of a classroom.

> *I try to make it student-centered. So whatever task like synthesizing paragraphs, I'd rather say synthesize the paragraph and then like put it up there [on the board] and like you know is this the right synthesis? And put it on students to like together decide that this is how it should be changed, as opposed to like me instead of saying this is how you synthesize a paragraph. Watch me do it. Now you do it, like that's wrong, and this is why it's wrong. I would rather just this is an exemplar of a strong paragraph. What makes it an exemplar? Now you try it. Ok this student tried it now. Do you agree that it's an exemplar? Why or why not? And me I'm just like the facilitator. And the goal is that ultimately they're the experts in the field like not me. I'm just a facilitator of the experience.*

Celia is in her fifth year of teaching while Sandra is in her eighth. As Sandra notes, new teachers tend to sacrifice the kind of curriculum they envision for one that prepares students for

standardized testing. What these teachers suggest is that experience in the classroom allows them sto implement a curriculum that meets accountability measures, while also being able to incorporate a curriculum that is democratic or facilitates in helping students create value.

Accountability measures align with Jennifer's philosophy of education. She believes standards, testing, and data help to provide students with an equitable education as it is an attempt to standardize or make equal the curriculum for all students. Jennifer explains,

> *I just, I have different lenses, you know, so I can tell you, I mean, it's in disarray. I was really happy when we got Common Core. Like, I know people hate Common Core. Like that was like the biggest thing. Why blah, blah, blah? But it's like it makes sense. Common Core makes sense. Because if I take a kid that's here and I pick them up, and I take them to Texas, guess what? It's going to be the same standards. We didn't have them before. The problem was when you go from one state to another state and there were completely different standards, completely different. Like just, you know, one state would be farther than the other. And then it's like you're doing a disservice to my kid, you know? I mean, we went from Kansas to California and apparently, like my son was put up a year in California, like he was moved a whole year in math and I mean, yeah, that's a great thing, but at the same time, I was like "what are we doing?" That's when I saw. Like, oh my God, this is a mess. So, when Common Core came out like four or five years ago, I was like yes, this is the answer! And then you get so much pushback. I don't understand. And I'm like, well, it makes sense. Common Core makes sense. You know, I don't know. I just see there's a lot of disproportion everywhere, not just here, but across. You know, unfortunately, I think as educators, I don't know if people realize how hard this job is. It's no longer how our teachers taught us. Because I remember what my*

teacher used to do and boy, I didn't do none of that stuff. Like, "here's a worksheet. You be quiet. Sit down." I used to go in there, do my work. And we never spoke. We never had turn and talk. We never had group projects. I don't remember any of that. None of that happening. And so, I think people think that teaching is easy and it's no longer easy. It's like, no, if you or if you're being held accountable, then it's not going. And I think that's the biggest difference with [the network] than from other schools. That we're held to such accountability. Like you're constantly, like, what's your data saying? What do you need to do? How do you need to fix it? And then it's no longer like, I don't take offense to it anymore. To me, it's like, oh, it's just a data point and it's just to help me be a better teacher for my kids. That's it. As where people who are new, take a big offensive to it. Well I don't understand, he keeps on telling you. Your data is telling you. It's not he who's telling you, he is just being, "hey, what are we going to do about the data? This is what it's telling you. Where are you going to fix it?" I think that's the biggest difference. You know?

For Jennifer, data provides an objective projection of students' future lives and opportunities, and college is heavily implicated in those opportunities. She is easily able to align her curriculum with Common Core standards and believes this is a way of achieving some form of equality within the curriculum for all of the United States. When asked if she was doing what she could to close the disproportionate gap she observed, she responds:

"Oh, absolutely. Absolutely. Yes. Especially, so like what I love about our school, we take NWEA [Northwest Evaluation Association Test], right. And so, what NWEA does is it allows the kids to take a test, but it's based on their like knowledge. It's not, every test is completely different to every child. OK. So, like if you do really well in geometry, it's

> *going to keep on pushing you in geometry questions. And so, what I love about it now is what they can do with it. Well, what we found about three years ago was what they did was you could actually see like whether they're on track to go to college or not. OK. So, if you're in the 50th percentile, then it's like there's an ACT that can be attached to that. So, you're within like a 19 or 20 ACT. So, then you can tell the kids, OK, now these are the types of schools that you might be able to go into. Like, I wish somebody would have said that to me when I was in middle school. You know, like just making them aware. I don't ever remember anybody talking to me about college when I was in middle school. You know, so empowering them, like this is what I'm giving you. And this is what you'll be able to do, if you stay on track, this is what you're projected to be and this is where you're projected to go, you know. I know I've been able to as a teacher, me myself, I've been able to close that gap significantly.*

Jennifer finds significant value in being able to show students their potential trajectory into college through testing and their test scores. Its ability to individualize scores, makes apparent what each student needs to accomplish in order to get into college. This information also makes her curriculum and time with students transparent. For Jennifer, the NWEA is a powerful tool that can help empower her student's learning.

While other teachers, except Jennifer, express conflict with accountability measures, Lillian struggles the most with her experience as a teacher in the network due to such measures. I provide a more in-depth story of Lillian's experience with accountability measures as the Midwest Charter Network was not her first experience with accountability measures. When asked why she chose to teach at her current school, she described not enjoying working in a middle school after two years of teaching and therefore applying to high schools. She did not

want to apply to a charter school because of her previous experience, but because she was "not hearing back from schools" she decided to "bite the bullet" and apply to the network. She says,

> *You know they're [her previous charter school] like a similar charter school to [this network]. And I didn't want to be in a charter school again because I didn't want. You're familiar with the demerit system, right? I was getting in trouble because I wasn't giving out enough demerits. I was getting in trouble because my kids weren't scoring high enough on the ACT. This is when the ACT was the "thing." Um, they weren't getting higher GPAs. So, I didn't want to work in that situation again where, like it was all on the teacher and not the student. Because growing up, my family was like "no it's your fault, it's your fault and not the teacher's fault." So, to be at [her previous charter school] and to realize it's my fault and not the student's fault. And I heard that [the Midwest Charter Network] was like that. Yeah, and I'm just like I need to get into high school and I knew that they were always hiring math teachers.*

When asked if this is the experience she is currently having, she says,

> *Yes and no. It's been more recently that the GPA, you know that we gotta make sure our GPAs are high enough. The SAT scores, cause you know it's SAT now, we can't do much about that. We still get not reprimanded, but "talked" to if it's not high enough. The demerits aren't as bad as [her previous charter school] where you know, you can get in trouble for not giving out demerits, as long as when you get the internal audit, or external audit, you know when the people come from the network, your scores are high enough, they leave you alone for the demerits. Yeah, cause my classroom management is pretty good. I have no, I also teach juniors and seniors so it's different then freshmen and*

> *sophomores. They're a little more mature, they know how to work the system to not get a demerit, or they know how to not push the buttons, or they know how to work it, sorry this is like totally honest. They know how to work it when people come in to observe you. So, they know they need to just shoo, be quiet and raise their hand and not talk. You know.*

To provide context, I provide an explanation of the audit process Lillian discusses. When I worked for the network, it was one person's job to go to audit schools in the network. This person showed up at random and walked around with a computer or a tablet and took notes. Her job was to make sure each campus was abiding by network policies. In the last school I worked for within the network, a schoolwide email would be sent out informing us that [Dana] was in the building. An almost automatic reaction to the email was to straighten up your back, as sitting up straight was a school policy. Dana had access to the school program in which demerits were logged and could therefore see if teachers kept track of dress code - which was supposed to be entered in by the first period teacher. If Dana came to your room during the third period and a student was not wearing a belt for example, she would check the program to see if demerits were entered in for that student. If they were not, the school would get "dinged or docked" points. Dings often resulted in an email from the principal who gave you a mulligan (which was explained to me as a "redo" or "do over" in golf). If you received more than a certain number of mulligans - which in reality equated to student demerits, your bonus would be deducted a certain percentage at the end of the year. Lillian described this as her "safe and support audit." She said, "if my safe and support audit - that's what it's called now - is not at a 98% by the end of the year, I don't get my five-hundred-dollar bonus." Principals' bonuses were also affected if the school received overall low scores.

Dings like demerits were possible for what seemed just about anything. If trash was on the ground, if students were not sitting up straight in their seats within a classroom, if a student did not greet a visitor with the correct script, if teachers heard a student cures in the hallway but did not issue a demerit, and the list goes on. Lillian said, "I actually got docked a point on my audit because I let a student get up and go get a tissue instead of having him raise their hand." Dana's frequent presence in any given school often sparked rumors about the likelihood of a principal being on "the chopping block," which often ended up being true. Her frequent presence in a school caused tension and anxiety for teachers and students. As a result of dings, principals came down on teachers -resulting in a deduction of pay, and teachers came down on students - resulting in an increase of demerits or detentions. The "safe and support audit" is an example of a top-down accountability measure. As Lillian explains, students know how to work the system. What she means is students recognize this top-down measure as well. While overall culture was strict, no one school could comply with all these regulations one hundred percent of the time. The email warning sent at Dana's presence allowed teachers to pause and make sure the class was "in order" before potentially being observed.

Lillian's description of students knowing how to "work the system" means they know when they are being surveilled and conform to the necessary changes when needed. Unlike Celia and Sandra, Lillian describes her approach in challenging the system differently,

> *So, since I've been there for 3 years, I've seen so many shifts. I think I've changed a lot and I think that other teachers that have been there since I've been there have changed a lot. So, I'll speak to me. The culture for me has shifted like from when I was new. I had a new curriculum I had to teach. Being a first-year teacher [within the network] is hard because you have to think about all of these things, data and all that. I think since I've*

been there it's shifted because I know how to work the system. I know how to work the system. I know how to stay off of admin's radar. And that might be bad of me to say, I just know what to say in order for them to get off my back. And I think the many teachers that have been there also know how to work the system so that we can stop being micromanaged and be in, you know, do what we need to do. My first year we had a ton of teachers. Like 10 teachers started with me, there are only 2 including me that are still there. Last year, it was crazy, we were being micromanaged so much that there was a mass exodus mid-year.

Lillian describes her experience of being "micromanaged,"

My first year, I had to show all of my lesson plans, all of my PowerPoints, all my homework, all my classwork. I had to write a script even though it wasn't my first-year teaching. So, it's not like I'm a first-year teacher, like I was in my fifth or sixth year of teaching already. So, I had to do that. And if they didn't like it, I had to go back and change it and go back and change it. And it was annoying because I had one, two, I was teaching five classes with three different contents in each of the classes that had like 30 kids. I mean, that's a lot to grade and plan for. And I had one prep period. So, then my second year they only micromanaged my 11th grade so they would analyze the data. They'd say this SAT skill, your students only got 50 percent mastery on. You need to teach a whole week on that one skill or teach like...And I would have to give regular assessments and show them my data. So just like in the end, I'm like, "why don't you just give me the materials to teach and I'll teach it." And that's what they did. Like my fourth quarter, I had my coach and I don't know why I did this. Maybe, I'm just tired, but she

> *wrote all of my assessments, she wrote all. Now keep in mind, this person had no idea what math content or how to teach math, cause she's an English teacher, and so they gave me all the materials, all the assessments, all the homework, all the classwork, because I just got tired of it.*

When asked if this is still her experience, Lillian says,

> *No. That's not at all the case. I think one of the reasons is because I told my coach, "I didn't like what happened last year, and if you make me do what I did last year, I'm going to quit." And it's hard to get teachers at [her current school] to want to stay. And it's hard to get people hired there. Teacher retention and teacher turnover has been a problem for many years - at least at the schools in the network that serve mostly African American students.*

Lillian was able to use high teacher turnover as leverage for no longer having to abide by accountability measures or what she deemed as "micromanaging."

Lillian describes the pressure of accountability on her experience as a teacher. Because the school struggles in getting and keeping quality teachers due to accountability measures, Lillian is able to simply say she will no longer be "micromanaged." Below she describes her school's struggle during the hiring process,

> *So, we'll have teachers come in for interviews and like, "oh, that's a good teacher like let's hire," but then they'll go to another school [in the network]. Or they'll go to [a public school] and I think it's because they've caught wind of things.*

Lillian described how teachers were so concerned and dissatisfied with the school or the network because of these accountability measures that they started a blog that describes why they left [the network]. One blogger wrote,

> *I didn't come to teach to a test, or lecture a bunch of bored teenagers, or demand rote memorization on historical topics that had no tangible connections to my students' lives. What's more, I most certainly did not come to police the bodies of young people of color—and nag and harass them and impose petty restrictions on their appearance, to value obedience over comfort in their own persons, or to issue demerits for speaking out when all they desired were answers to their relevant, inquisitive questions. I came to teach that history, and the actions of people and groups in the past, has a direct impact on the structures and institutions that we find ourselves embedded in today. More particularly, I wanted my students to look at that past through a multifaceted and critical lens of race and politics, civic engagement, and relationships of power. I wanted them feel empowered in their own selves and challenge the place that others would assert is theirs in the world.*

When asked if she is able to provide them with a kind of curriculum or pedagogy that aligns with her philosophy of education, Lillian explains,

> *honestly, it's like I've come to and this might sound bad as a teacher, but it's like it is what it is. And I just get to teach them so that this way, you know, they get the 530 in math. So, this way they can get to a school that has a high graduation rate for their GPA. So, it's like I'm tunnel focused. 530 is the college-ready for math. College-ready SAT score for math. So, like it's tunnel focus because we analyze all these things. It's like,*

OK, I got to teach them this, this, and this in order for them to get that score. I got to teach this and this and to make sure they get the 4 on the IB [International Baccalaureate] test. So, they get the college credit, if they go to a public university. So, it's like tunnel vision. I can't have them explore how they want to learn. I can't have them explore the math topics that work, but like in general though, math is pretty like narrow-focused anyways so I don't know.

Lillian further explains,

I know what to tell him in order for them not to micromanage my teaching. So I know I'm like, OK, we're going to spend the first 30 minutes doing these skills and then I'm going to tie it into homework, or I'm going to tie it into their classwork so that we can learn both these skills together. Now, for the most part, do I kind of do it? Yes. But I just don't. I don't know how they do it in other schools. I keep saying this, but like the way they do it here. It's just like I said, micromanage. Our students come in so low sometimes in math that it's hard to play catch up and teach them grade-level content. So, I just think I saw this last year when I was teaching. They get bored and they hate it. So, they don't do well because they don't like it. So, I'm just going with the motion so that I can keep teaching new skills so they can be happy, so the students can be happy and want to learn.

Lillian also adds,

We're so tied into SAT numbers, SAT growth, SAT scores, IB scores, that I'm just, you know, rote teaching. Not rote teaching, but like robot teaching. So, like this is what you do. da da da da da. This is why we do it, because we need to get the score. This is why we

do it, because you need to know this for the IB test. Now, in advisory, I think I am starting. I'm changing what, they're [administration] not going to be happy, but I'm not going to do what they want me to do. And I want, I want them to develop more. I'm going to, during their sophomore year, say, hey, these are the things that are outside of school you should look into them. Not for them to transfer, but like, hey, you want to take piano? Here's some free piano lessons. You want to do drama, here's some drama lessons so that this way they're not limited to what's in school.

Lillian struggles with a "narrow focus" on test scores and being evaluated by test metrics. Unlike Celia and Sandra who feel they are able to implement the kind of curriculum they want while also meeting test scores, Lillian struggles to do the same. However, it seems to become easier and easier for her to implement the kind of curriculum she wants. She expresses a desire to teach students other topics of interests, but worries it is at the risk of not getting them scores needed to get into colleges with high graduation rates, where they are more likely to matriculate, or they will not get college credit for the IB test. For Lillian the stakes are too high to deviate far from a test prep curriculum. She plans, however, to begin to give students options to explore personal interests and help them access resources outside of the school.

Discipline

Discipline is also a theme all participants discuss as seen in the accounts of Gloria, Lillian, and the blog post. The lines between academic and disciplinary measures are often blurred within the network, but help to understand how these teachers describe their experiences teaching in a charter school in the context of neoliberal accountability politics. Disciplinary policies are believed to foster a safe learning environment.

Sandra describes the kind of personal contention she feels when teacher's critique the dress code within the network,

> *I think that our school has been really critical of the dress code, which is fair, and the dress code was created by like a white man, you know, and sometimes it can be a little rigid. I do think it's a problematic and racist issue, but sometimes I think it leans a little, sometimes their criticism leans a little bit too like they completely disagree with a dress code. And it's like why do you work [within the network] if you don't even believe there should be a dress code?*

Here, Sandra is critical of a policy, but does not fully agree with not having a policy in support of a dress code.

Jennifer provides insight into the current critique when asked why her school started an initiative for diversity, equity, and inclusion,

> *I mean, there are so many things that are being changed at our school, you know. I mean, it all started, of course, with the discipline policy. How we've been shunned upon because kids couldn't go to the bathroom without getting to a demerit, you know, and stuff like that. Like who does that to children? They're not in jail. Blah, blah, blah kind of deal. So, they've been trying to get away from that media and rethink, "okay, how can we do this?" Because I guess the systems that they've had in place where they're like, oh, this is too much like the systems they have in jail and stuff for the kids. And is that equitable? Because when you go to a suburban school, that's not the way they're treated.*

Jennifer articulates one change made to the system,

Kids at our school now, they just have to ask to go to the bathroom. You just give them a pass and they can go to the bathroom. They don't have to be escorted anymore. So that's like an equitable thing they've done differently.

Bathroom escorts existed when I worked within the network. When students needed to use the bathroom during class, they would ask the teacher. The teacher would stop class and call the main office for an escort. Escorts were often security guards or support staff who would come to the classroom and escort the student to the bathroom. The staff member would wait outside of the bathroom until the student was finished and escort them back to class. No participant provided a critique about this practice, but from personal experience this practice shamed both students and teachers. Security and staff members began to report that certain teachers were allowing students to use the washroom more than others. These teachers were seen as the "weak ones" that students took advantage of, as not having good classroom management, and as not abiding by the "unwritten" school policies of simply saying "no" to students. Saying no was encouraged as was "reminding" students to use the washroom during passing periods. The rationale for this was that while in the bathroom, students were missing out on critical instructional time while also distracting the learning environment for others. Having to stop the class and make a phone call in front of 30 students was often embarrassing for students as was having someone wait for them outside of the washroom, which helped to discourage them from even asking. Throughout the school year, girls often wore sweatpants and this was a clear indicator – for the entire school to see that their school uniform pants were ruined by their menstrual cycle. Embarrassment in asking often led to girls not asking and as a result, then having to wear sweatpants if they did not get to the washroom in time. When I once asked a girl why she was absent so much throughout the school year, she told me she did not attend school

when her menstrual cycle began as using the bathroom throughout the day was difficult, particularly because most of the escorts were males and they often needed to go to their lockers for feminine products. Bathroom escorts, therefore, resulted in embarrassing or missed educational experiences for girls.

Above Jennifer, like Sandra, articulates the critique surrounding bathroom usage, but does not necessarily agree with it. She explains that eliminating bathroom escorts is not a push toward a more equitable experience for students and the school as a whole. Jennifer outweighs the cost of having students escorted, and sees this change as potentially detrimental to the wider school culture. She explains,

> *when the kids used to ask, why do we have to always get escorted. I said because unfortunately you think it's OK to put paper wads in the ceiling. You think it's OK to stuff all this paper in the toilet seat and, you know, clog up our toilets. Like, these are things I saw at other schools in the city that I saw kids doing. I realized, oh, this is why it doesn't happen here, because we have these systems in place to avoid all this. You know, there's no graffiti or anything like that because there's someone always watching you in the restroom.*

When asked if she in fact sees this kind of behavior take place once the rules were changed, she says,

> *We've seen an influx of fights. You know, I'll meet you at the bathroom at this time, type of deal. They're not dumb, they're going to work around the system. I mean, you know kids are very smart. They'll figure out what to do, how to do it. I had a little girl literally who I finally caught onto her. She told her best friend, who was in a different class "at this time go to the bathroom, just ask to go to the bathroom," right. And so, when we*

send them out to the bathroom, we just have to like log it on Group Meet real quick. Like hey such and such is going and I kept seeing their names always pop up at the same time. Like, seriously, girls, really? You're going to the bathroom to do what? It's disgusting in there. Ain't nothing you need to do in that bathroom. You know, so I always try to remind the kids that's the most disgusting place, there are so many germs, so it'll be a place they don't want to go. But yeah. So unfortunately, you're gonna see those influxes and we try to avoid them as much as we possibly can. But it is what it is.

When asked how or if this has impacted her in any way, Jennifer says,

Oh, absolutely. Because kids are like you're so strict, you're so like. Every year, so the kids will, we have them now do surveys on us. What do you think of Mrs. [Gonzalez]? Do you feel safe and secure in that room? One of the questions is, do you feel safe and secure? Do you feel respected? And do you feel like she's equal to everyone, blah, blah, blah? So, I mean, across the board, the highest scores are for Mrs. Gonzalez. And just because I'm just very consistent, I don't care who you are. The moment you walk in, you're my student. I don't care who you are, I'm going to treat you the exact same way. But then you see like other teachers, because we share all our data, all our data goes up, every year now, like when we ever have professional development. And we have like these days where you sit all day in meetings and they're showing you all the data. That's one of our data now. And you'll see like these teachers who are getting twos and ones. And it's like, "what are you doing in your classroom? Obviously, you have not set up that culture," it's all about culture in the classroom, you know, and the kids are just like, no, she doesn't care about me, she doesn't love me or she just gives out demerits to give out

demerits or he or she or whatever the case may be. So yeah, I just think that's a huge burden."

Jennifer finds a shift in the culture of the school in a negative direction as a result of the policy change. She describes that in simply allowing students to use the bathroom unescorted, other disciplinary issues have come to light. The relaxing of policies also meant she is seen as the stricter teacher. However, because she holds high expectations for students, the students respect her, which is also an indicator that students respect the structure.

Most teachers take on an advisory. Generally, this is considered a homeroom that teachers stay with all four years, and these are split up into girl and boy advisories. Lillian describes her experience, first with junior girls and then with incoming freshmen girls. She raises questions about the structure as a whole as she begins to see how the disciplinary system affects students differently in the course of their secondary education career. Of particular concern is the long-term effects this has for students who struggle within such a structure and therefore leave.

So, my first year there, I got a junior advisory. So, I got lucky. They were already molded; they already knew the system. They knew how to work it so they were great. Like I said, the best advisory till the day they graduated. Then my principal was like, "oh, you're getting freshmen advisory," and I'm like "holy shit." Because I know how crazy they are. So those freshmen came in and they hated the demerits. They hated our system. And were like "this is a prison; you're always trying to tell us what to do". So, it's like yeah, they come in and think we're just there to punish them. Sometimes by their junior year they know that's the system, and it's like, whatever. Who cares? I'm just not going to talk. But yeah, that's what they come in experiencing. So, some of them, you know,

> *they're like whatever it's their expectation. But then there's still some that are like, you know what? "I'm still going to tell this teacher off. I don't care. She said something to me." So, this is where this is so bad. The weeding out starts to happen where I know that some of them are not coming back their sophomore year because they don't want to have to deal with it. One good thing, though, is that, which I've told them you're, you're no longer restricted from promoting based on detentions. Oh, yeah. That's a change. So, where I think it was 40 detentions, you couldn't promote to sophomore year even if you had straight A's, which is fuckin' ridiculous, fuckin' ridiculous. That was one of the things I hated. It's like, OK, so this is like a prison where you're not giving them a chance. So, someone with straight A's comes in tardy all the time, like you're just going to not promote them to sophomore year. That's stupid. So, I've developed a relationship with half of the girls who are troubled kids – in quotes. Where it's like, OK, whatever, you had a bad week. Let's get a clean week next week, don't get more than three demerits and your good, your detention count goes down. So, there's still like a quarter of the students who are just rebelling. So, it's still hard for them to be themselves, and not, I don't know.*

Lillian begins by showing us how some students are able to conform to the disciplinary policies and are able to matriculate through to graduation. She also expresses concern for incoming students who struggle to adapt and are therefore weeded out. Another change in policy centers on promotion criteria. Previously, if students earned a certain number of detentions within the year, they were not eligible to promote to the next grade level. From experience, this too acted as a "weeding out" process. Those who did not promote, often left and went to a neighborhood public school. Students who did not promote within their junior and senior year and stayed in the

network were exponentially less likely to finish high school than those who did not promote during their freshman or sophomore year. The change allows for students who receive more than 40 detentions to attend a restorative program during the summer and complete a campus character development class, which "encourages reflection, skill development, and self-discipline" (Midwest Charter Network, 2019). Lillian uses this as a way to encourage students who struggle with discipline.

Lillian reflects on her personal upbringing to try and understand the differences she experiences between different demographics of students. Disciplinary policies affect her relationship with students. This is her personal understanding,

> *I don't know. I grew up in [a Mexican neighborhood], so I was surrounded by family-oriented people. My family was all about family. And I obviously had values and norms from my family and from growing up, and I'm a mom. So, I treat most of these kids how I would want – this is probably bad – how I want my children to act in school, you know, "Don't talk back to the teacher, do your homework, just be good." So, I think being family oriented does play a large part. Now this is probably not good – what I'm about to say, but when I was at [a public school with predominantly Latino/Hispanic students], the culture from the students and the way they treated me is really different then the culture of the students from where I'm at now. Because the demographic is totally different. And this is probably bad what I'm about to say, but being Hispanic or Latina, you're taught to, alright, I'm going to be blunt. You're taught to respect individuals, you're taught to respect teachers and authority, whereas I'm at – in an all African American school, they are not taught to rebel against authority, but they see authority figures as someone who is trying to bring them down. And I can see that, you*

know. So, I have to build a relationship as a mom and as a teacher to say that I'm not going to bring you down. I'm trying to lift you up as my teachers did. So, I have to because I get a new group of students every year and have to build relationships. But it's hard because like they, you know, they've been there two years and all they've been taught is demerits, demerits, demerits. So, to show them that my values are different from other teachers that you may have met. It's hard.

This observation, whether correct or not, is shaped by the disciplinary system of the network and comes in direct conflict with building relationships with students. While it crosses racial and ethnic relations, Lillian's main point is that discipline makes it difficult to cultivate relationships with students. She provides an example in which she believes the disciplinary system helps to essentially "weed out" entering freshmen girls. Discipline is often equated to academic ability. When I worked within the network, administrators often made correlations between academic success and a student's ability to follow discipline policies. An assumption was made that one's ability to follow the disciplinary system was an appropriate indicator of a student's academic ability. Critical questions were rarely asked about reasons for why students who could not abide by the discipline policy did not fare well academically.

Finding 5: The Student-Teacher Relationship

Building relationships with students is also a theme found among all participants. This too is not just a subject glossed over, but all participants discuss its importance to the success of their students, although their conceptualization and approaches to relationship building are different. The excerpts below display the loving and reflective natures of these teachers. Each, attempt to recognize their students' individual needs and to cultivate their agency in creating value in the classroom. Teachers skillfully balance and use their content and curriculum in this

effort. This theme helps to understand how these teachers describe their experiences teaching in a charter school in the context of neoliberal accountability politics, how their identity is implicated in the teaching process, and provides a vivid example of how these teachers subscribe to the educational philosophies resonant with those of Dewey and Makiguchi.

In speaking about her dissatisfaction regarding disciplinary policies of a previous school she worked at within the network, Frida said,

> *In the other school, it's always discipline, discipline that comes first before getting to figure out what is wrong with the student. And I don't believe that. I believe you need to listen to their story. There's a lot of things that happens today that affect our students in a much more intense way than when we used to be in school.*

This is why she loves the current school she is in which focuses more on "love and high expectations." Frida says,

> *I'm strict with them, but I also care about them and I listen to them. I check in with students, not only on my caseload, but on other caseloads when I kind of see they are probably having a rough day. I listen to them. I don't tell them my experience every day. I tell everyone this, it has to come organically. There has to be a purpose as to why you're telling them your experience, because then if you overly do it, they don't care about it. They don't listen to it. And I think that's what I do really well with my students. I actually talk to them and I respect them and I make sure that they respect me.*

She further explains how important it is to consider the following when trying to build a relationship with students,

> *understanding that every day they are a new student, they are having a new day. Don't ever hold anything that they've done in the past against them. I think many teachers do*

> *that. And it's a big hurdle that they always hold a grudge for something that they've done or they've done on the first day. And that's not them. That was something they did, that was them. But every day for them, they are changing because every day they're learning. So, I think that's what I really do well. I talk to them and I listen to them like I really want to know what's going on with them.*

Frida's loving spirit lies in her ability to see and re-see each student anew - each day. Teaching and learning for her means taking into consideration the feeling life of the individual. Frida sees students as ever-changing, developing, and improving, and in understanding that, she carefully tends to their needs so that she is able to further cultivate that relationship and is able to see them grow.

Celia and Sandra also see relationship building as important. These teachers, however, explain that their curriculum is central to building that relationship. Student-teacher relationships and implementing a value-creating education or democratic experience in the classroom are not mutually exclusive, but rather building a trusting relationship with students is critical in fostering their agency to learn and create value. In the excerpt below, Celia describes her approach to relationship building,

> *I'm very intentional of connecting verses, like having it be very natural. And I think that different teachers connect differently. My intentional connection is through my curriculum, like trying to make sure. I really think it is very important to me that students see themselves in what they're learning. And I also want to see myself in what I'm teaching. So, I focus a lot of my curriculum on social justice and like pulling a lot of female authors. Because they don't read a lot of female authors when reading from the canon. Choosing texts that relate to the communities they belong to. So, whether it's from*

[this city] or African American, Latino, LGTBQ, and trying to even find ways that I can connect those communities together so that they can see the parallels. So that's where I'm like intentionally connecting in the sense of having a relationship with students. I do have relationships with students, but I really think my number one goal is to make sure that they are able to tackle real-world things in my class versus like them leaving and I'm their best friend. You know what I mean?

Celia labels this balance between advancing her curriculum and building relationships a 60:40 ratio, respectively. Celia chooses "texts that relate to the communities they belong to" to make the curriculum relevant to her students. She also uses texts from within [this city], African American, Latino, or LGTBQ communities to "connect those communities together so that they can see the parallels" to their own lives. In this way, Celia uses her local community to help her students observe, confirm, and learn universal principles. Celia made it clear to say that the curriculum, when carefully formed, make her more approachable and allows for students to see her as a mentor, "I do think that because of the curriculum, students are able to respect me and trust me, which I think is cool about relationships."

When interviewed, Sandra had just recently come back to teaching from her maternity leave. Via student narratives she found that her substitute teacher, who she deems as a "young and inexperienced" alumni from the network, was too focused on building relationships at the expense of learning. Sandra describes a need to balance high expectations when building relationships with students, "I build relationships with students, just not at the cost of making sure they are producing high level work." She articulates how students perceive the substitute's priority for building relationships as a "lowering" of expectations for them,

> *One of the kids commented "she gets happy when we turn a paper in, like aren't we supposed to turn in papers?" So, I think while I was gone kids were just rushing to finish things but they weren't doing them well or right. And so ever since I've gone back, I've just been focusing on synthesizing paragraphs, so "gisting", I don't know if you remember that term. But it's basically like paraphrasing which is actually pretty high level because it's like synthesizing something. So, I would say like "OK we're going to do this" and then they would just fill their paper up and it was just me saying "nope you didn't do it, let's do it right now. Let's spend five minutes talking about what this paragraph means. So right now, it's just kind of like re-establishing what good work is.*

Sandra's experience demonstrates a more complex understanding of human relationships - particularly within the student-teacher dynamic. Sandra, like Celia, considers the curriculum and the purpose of their role, as teachers, to help develop and dance the fine line between teaching and building a strong human relationship that together helps to facilitate learning and growth. This relationship is mutually respectful, mutually built, and takes time. Sandra is not afraid of saying "no you did it wrong, we are doing it again - together." She describes having to start all over toward the middle of the school year in "re-establishing" expectations and she does this while teaching a difficult skill. The teachers in this study do not lose sight of the importance of the curriculum and in fact find it to be "the way" in which relationships could be cultivated. They also see that students recognize teacher's respect for them through the difficulty of their curriculum and pedagogy and that is the way learning and personal growth is able to take place.

The word (urban) is used by 5 of the 6 participants. It is not simply used as a descriptor of place or location but also carries deeper and significant meanings for the lived experiences of

both teachers and students. As Frida describes, to build relationships with students, a teacher has to listen to them, to their stories, to what they are "really" saying. The word urban is used, for example, in Sandra's description of her philosophy of education in which she says,

> *My perspective is based on urban education. I believe that we who serve in urban settings, are tasked with the responsibility of exposing our kids to all challenges that are comparable to what students in wealthier school districts are exposed to but providing them with the right supports and scaffolds to access them and experience success.*

Sandra raises the realities of the students who live within urban communities. She specifically serves low-income, predominantly Latino students, who are not exposed to what "wealthier school districts are exposed to."

The urban experience in the United States is characterized by high crime rates, drug addiction, poverty, and lack of affordable housing and quality public schools that are linked to race and socio-economic status. Harsh realities exist for low-income students. The teachers within this study do not separate this reality from their teaching. It, instead, helps to guide their philosophy of education and their understanding of these realities are used to help build relationships with students. Attention is placed on the real human conditions of their lives. Sandra describes how important it is for

> *urban educators need to recognize the trauma that our students have and to be mindful of that. One criticism of our schools is for instance that it's militaristic. You know, you need to be sitting up every day and when you don't it's a demerit. If they're not, have you*

thought about whether they have had a meal this morning or whether they were up to 3am in the emergency room because so-and-so was hurt.

Like Sandra, other participants find that the experiences of students are difficult and conscientiously remember this while trying to build relationships. Below, Jennifer describes her approach with students who struggle with significant trauma,

I think just a genuine "good morning." You know, a genuine good morning or a genuine hug. I mean, we had a situation where, like one of the girls comes in and she was really upset. She came in late really upset. Before she walked in, I said "hey, hey, hey, what's going on? Why are you upset? I haven't even seen you today. You just walked in, it's the morning" and just understanding to take two seconds to listen to them. "My mom was late. Now, I got a demerit and it's her fault." "I completely understand it's not your fault. Let's remember, it's not going to count towards this. Yes, unfortunately, you're going to have to have a detention if it gives you four [demerits], but you're here, you're safe. And that's all that matters. Right?" Like giving them a different perspective, even if it takes two minutes, take that time with that kid because you don't know with that scenario. Or sometimes they can come in. "Oh my god Ms. Gonzalez, we were just on the bus and there was a drive-by shooting." This is their lives. This is their lives. They're getting off a drive-by shooting and now they're coming and you're expecting them to be OK. You know, I had some other student this year where mom was in a relationship with a guy and ended up breaking up with him. This crazy guy ends up gunning down their apartment. You know, they've had all this trauma overnight and then they're back in school at 7:00 a.m. because this is a place where they feel the safest. And then the biggest reward for me

is after this little girl had gone through all that, she's trying to figure out how to do my homework.

Jennifer makes attempts to understand student experiences beyond the classroom. By taking the time to get to know her students, they are able to see her compassion and genuine sense of understanding. In spite of personal trauma or struggles they face, these interactions help in some way to move forward the curriculum and learning.

All six participants were born and raised in an urban setting, five in the Midwest and one on the West Coast. Understanding stems from their awareness of the realities these students face, and by simply listening to them, as Jennifer describes. I asked Jennifer if there is anything else that allows her to build these kinds of relationship with students, she says,

I think being Hispanic gives me leverage with the kids, because they know that I'm also, you know, a minority like they are. So, they know, oh, she's not Black, well, she's Hispanic, so she's just like us for some reason in their little heads. And I'm just like, OK. In the kid's eyes, I think that's why I'm so acceptable, and so they accept me so easily. Yeah, it's just because I'm just a minority to them, but to me, I mean, I don't see it that way. Being Hispanic to me. I feel like it's an empowerment. I feel like I have an advantage. Like I have so much to offer.

Jennifer attributes her identity of being Hispanic in allowing her to more easily build relationships with her students. Jennifer rephrases the critical nature of student-teacher relationships in urban education in the following way:

> *As far as teachers, we've had a huge turnover, unfortunately. Teaching urban education, what I've seen a lot is the fact that there's just a lot of turnover with teachers. They can't, you're either made for this job or you're not. You either know how to create relationships with your students or you're not going to make it. In urban education, that is the difference between urban education and for me, like suburban education. You've got to learn how to build those relationships. If you're not willing to make relationships with your students. Then you will not make it.*

When asked why that is, Jennifer says:

> *Because our students are so. I feel like in urban education, unfortunately, these kids have seen a lot of turmoil. They don't know what consistency is. They don't know what somebody actually caring about them for no reason and giving them something for no reason is. You know, like, "well, what do you want from me?" "I don't want nothing. I just want you to show up every day. I want you to do your homework. Yeah, you're right. I do want something. And that's just for you. But that's not for me. It's for you." They just thrive on relationships. I mean, I wish I knew, you know, there's some that you just have to have a one-on-one relationship. Literally give them the time because nobody gives them the time. They don't have that at home. You know, they've got five, six siblings maybe at home. Mom works, you know, late and nobody sees them. They're probably the ones raising their brothers and sisters. So, nobody ever worries about them, you know. So that one teacher to build that relationship with you. "You made me feel special. You give me the time. I'm going to love that teacher because she gave me the time." That might be it. You know, I mean, you have kids who have it all at home. You really do. You don't*

have to make. But there are kids in our school that unless you are willing to make that, you're not going to make it. You know, they will drive your day to a living hell because they will try you every day. But once you make that relationship, they're going to be your biggest advocate. And there's nobody that can touch you at that school. They'll be here. They'll be like, "Mrs. Gonzalez is talking. What are you doing? Why are you talking? Did she tell you to talk? No. Ok." You know. So, like I said just. It's about the kids.

The stories Jennifer shares of the lives of her students are real and have real implications for learning, growth, and value creation in the classroom. When a student is not sitting straight up in their seat, Sandra questions, "have you thought about whether they have had a meal this morning or whether they were up to 3am in the emergency room because so-and-so was hurt." The urban experience helps to shape teacher's philosophy of education. Teachers in this study use their understanding of the disparities and inequalities students experience to not only help shape the curriculum but to build critical relationships that fostered learning and growth.

Conclusion

This chapter presented the findings from the six interviews and document analysis. The findings include the role of personal racial, ethnic, and gender identity in shaping these teachers' professional careers including aspects of their philosophies of education, curricula, and pedagogy, the ways in which these teachers share common epistemological perspectives resonant with the educational philosophies of Dewey and Makiguchi, how social inequalities are used as a lens in which to articulate their beliefs surrounding the purpose of education, the expressed positive experiences of working within the Midwest Charter Network, how personal conflict

with accountability measures arise within their curriculum, pedagogy, and experience with students, and lastly the importance of student-teacher relationships in the growth and learning process. In the next chapter, I discuss these findings relative to the research questions. I also present the implications, suggestions for further research, and conclusions of the study.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Introduction

To make contributions related to curriculum studies, the purpose of this qualitative multisite instrumental case study was to explore how six Latina teachers within the Midwest Charter Network articulated the purpose of education, their educational philosophies, pedagogical practices, and formation of curricula within the context of the accountability movement. In conjunction with this, I also sought to understand how these teachers' personal race, ethnicity, culture, and overall identity were implicated in their perspectives. Four research questions were used: (a) When thinking about education under the effects of neoliberal politics, how do Latina teachers who work in a charter school conceive the purpose of education? (b) How do these teachers describe their experiences teaching in a charter school in the context of neoliberal accountability politics? (c) How is their identity implicated in the teaching process? (d) Do these teachers subscribe to educational philosophies resonant with those of John Dewey and Tsunesaburo Makiguchi?

In the preceding chapter, I presented the findings of my research. The first finding discusses how personal identity plays out in the professional lives of these teachers. In their articulations, we see how professional teacher identity formation is often a negotiation between the context in which they are immersed and their own perceptions, beliefs, experiences, and practices. The second finding discusses how all teachers share common epistemological perspectives resonant with the educational philosophies of Dewey and Makiguchi. Social justice is the lens through which they describe the purpose of education. The third finding discusses the positive experiences these teachers experience working in the network. The fourth finding describes teachers' experiences under neoliberal accountability measures. Disciplinary policies

within the school act to reinforce academic accountability measures. The fifth finding describes the importance these teachers place on the student-teacher relationship within an urban setting in trying to achieve their purpose of education.

In this final chapter, I discuss the meaning and significance of the findings presented in chapter 4. I first provide a summary of each finding and address how the findings answer my research questions. To add significance, consider different meanings, and offer a new dimension of understanding, I provide an interpretation of the findings. I use the extant literature to provide a comparison on whether my interpretations contradict, correspond, or deepen my findings and that which has already been reported in the literature, or to acknowledge the unique contributions of this research. I also acknowledge how the findings relate to my personal assumptions about the study. I conclude with the implications for education and the field of curriculum studies and include recommendations for future research.

Revisiting Research Questions 1 and 4

Question 1: When thinking about education under the effects of neoliberal politics, how do Latina teachers who work in a charter school conceive the purpose of education?

Question 4: Do these teachers subscribe to educational philosophies resonant with those of Dewey and Makiguchi?

The teachers in this study describe the purpose of education in ways that help to answer questions 1 and 4 and are therefore presented together here. These teachers share common epistemological perspectives resonant with John Dewey's and Tsunesaburo Makiguchi's both in articulation of the purpose of education and in their overall educational philosophies. Epistemological and ontological iterations include a humanist approach, viewing education as a means toward self-actualization and a place where curiosity and personal interests are cultivated.

The teachers in this study see education as a way to improve the lives of students and social experiences, and as a way to serve a broader social good. These teachers also see the cultivation of a student-teacher relationship as necessary to the growth and learning process. Overall, these perspectives are grounded in social inequalities found in society.

The process of developing one's own personal philosophy of education grows out of who we are, what we believe, and the experiences we have had. These interviews allowed participants to reflect and articulate their personal theory about what education is or can be. The main questions I posed to participants to reveal these findings included what is your philosophy of education?, and what do you believe is the purpose of education? These questions were not suggestive of any one particular theoretical framework, but revealed a common belief about the purpose of education. The perspectives of these teachers do not resonate with the discourse of neoliberal education.

Over a century old, the theoretical frameworks of Dewey, a Western philosopher, and Makiguchi, an Eastern philosopher, derive from individuals who lived in industrializing societies where the education of their time centered on the economic, political, and national interests of their respective countries. They, however, envisioned an alternative form of education than that of the hegemonic discourse in which they lived. Under neoliberal efforts today, education has been molded to train students for work by providing them with a limited set of skills and information to do a particular job. This belief was cultivated to fuel a growing global economy (Apple, 2009; Taubman 2009). The narrowing in the purpose of schooling has taken shape via standards, high-stake testing, and other accountability measures (Carter & Lochte, 2017; Connel, 2013; Hunter & Bartee, 2003). The philosophies of Dewey and Makiguchi problematize this limited vocational view of education.

While accountability measures pressure these teachers to conform their curriculum and pedagogy along narrowly defined terms, no math teacher in this study said "I want my students to walk out of my class fully mastering the steps of a quadratic equation," and no English teacher said "I want my students to know the proper placement of a semicolon—this will serve them well in the workforce." The significance of this finding lies in the idea that true education, for these six teachers, transcends their content. The curriculum and pedagogy are important, even critical, but are used as a means to achieve in education what Dewey and Makiguchi believe is the true purpose: happiness of the individual, a striving toward self-actualization, and social progress.

In spite of accountability pressures placed upon these six teachers, these findings show that their articulation of the purpose of education are in direct conflict with neoliberal utilitarian approaches to education. Frida states that a teachers' philosophy is "always evolving." I did not ask participants what their beliefs were about education prior to entering into the profession, or how it changed over the course of their careers. However, in spite of being deeply immersed in accountability efforts, these teachers shared educational philosophies with Dewey and Makiguchi. The lived realities of these teachers, what it means to actually work with students, to see and understand how their students' lives play out within the educational setting, and intimate student-teacher human interactions supersedes neoliberal understandings of education.

Humanist Education

The goal of a neoliberal education is to build self-reliant individuals within a capitalist economy who are able to fulfill the obligations and expectations of a consumer-citizen (Davies & Bansel, 2007). Frida and Gloria express a humanist approach to education that parallels that of Dewey (1934) and Makiguchi (Hatano, 2009). These teachers consider the broader needs of their

students, concern for their social and emotional well-being, and want their students to understand they are capable of growth and the ability to achieve their personal best – whatever that may be. Limited resources that could potentially help Frida's ESL newcomer students who are unable to access the school's curriculum because of their inability to speak English, or Gloria's students whose parents do not speak English, are not accounted for under the hegemonic discourse of accountability. According to Gloria, students who benefit the most from the system set up under accountability measures are those who are a "very, very specific type of student" that is able to "follow everything to a T," or fit the mold in which this system is tailored. Those unable to succeed "fall in the cracks," and therefore reflects how such a system remains inequitable. The trauma and gun violence experienced by Jennifer's students are still expected to meet the expectations of a consumer-citizen. Gloria explains that she offers the same service – college counseling – or curriculum to students, which in theory appears equitable, but each student's individual needs and life circumstances cannot be fully addressed, which changes the outcome for each student. Each teacher has skills, like Gloria's ability to speak Spanish, that helps to bridge the gap for some students and families, but they alone are not able to accommodate or remedy the varying life circumstances of each student to ensure all are successful in the process. Differences in student needs are not accounted for in building a self-reliant individual who is tasked with the obligation of supporting themselves and their families. The everyday realities of education and the human interaction between teacher and student has a greater impact in how these teachers see the purpose of education which aligns with that of Dewey and Makiguchi.

Frida and Gloria address the role of policy makers in making decisions that affect their inability to offer a humanist approach in education. Gloria describes a lack of "human

connection" or "interest" in making education accessible to all or simply that those making such decisions are by people who are not in the school system or have forgotten its complexity. When asked to describe the current state of education Frida and Gloria describe an overwhelming focus on tangible measurables for learning including GPA, test scores, and college acceptance rates. A humanist approach, or lack thereof, has broader implications for these teachers. These teachers express the ability for each student to find success within the educational experience if enough resources, time, and understanding is dedicated to them. Students whose life circumstances closely align with the standard ideals set by neoliberal policies are potentially able to be successful within such a system, but those whose life circumstances do not, struggle to find that success.

Student Self-Actualization

Frida, Lillian, Gloria, and Celia express seeing education as the place where students are to develop their full potential. They believe the school should offer resources, classes, and experiences that cultivate the interest of students. Gloria stated, school should be the place where a student is able to "explore different interests that you may or may not have and hopefully that's going to inspire you to want to further know more things." By doing so, students learn the spirit of curiosity and develop an inquiring mind and want to learn skills that help them realize their full capabilities. Offering choices, beyond those predetermined by the path of accountability, gives students the freedom to decide for themselves. Dewey and Makiguchi, too, believe the growth and development of the student into a fully realized human being is necessary not just for the individual but also for active engagement in society and the world at large (Dewey, 1897; Goulah, 2013; Mayes, Montero, & Maile Cutri, 2004).

Both Dewey and Makiguchi see the child's desires as a necessary starting point for learning and growth (Dewey, 1897; Goulah, 2015). Both believe "knowing and learning" take place long before they enter into formal education, as they are already "active participants in and observers of their surroundings" (Gebert, 2009, p. 150), who enter into the classroom with "wisdom" from "their experience in the world" (Dewey, 1897, p. 80). Teachers should therefore approach learning from the starting point of a child's "capabilities, interests, and habits" (Dewey, 1897, p. 80). Limiting a child to a predetermined curriculum, detached from their interests has broader societal implications. Dewey and Makiguchi do not see this as educative, but rather leading to a passive individual, lacking independent thinking, criticality, and one unable to participate ethically in society (Dewey 1916; Goulah, 2015). For both, pedagogical practices rooted in the child are durable, and effective in responding to the needs of every learner in a pluralistic society (Mayes, Montero, & Maile Cutri, 2004).

Frida, Lillian, Gloria, and Celia express wanting more options for their students to explore areas of interests that align with their personal wants and needs. Standardized testing, however, narrows the curriculum, not just within a given content area, but also within a school. A focus on "core" subjects tested, results in the inability to offer courses or learning opportunities that enrich or cultivate one's interest and curiosity. Aside from the diminishing of instructional minutes dedicated to subjects not tested in primary and secondary school (Fitchett & Heafner, 2010; Volga, 2003), broader implications result from the narrowing of curriculum. A narrowed curriculum results in the devaluing and valuing of particular teachers and certain knowledge forms. In the discourse used by Gloria, the college counselor, she calls teachers whose subjects are tested "core" teachers. Not only is their content area considered more important or core to the school, but so are these teachers. Frida, an ESL teacher, serves in an

ancillary role whereby her content is used to help develop skills needed for the test in other "core" classes. The narrowing of a school's curriculum limits students' exposure to content, skills, or interests that might otherwise help them to fully self-actualize and in this case acts to marginalize both Frida and Gloria within the school.

This finding supports the existing literature regarding the narrowing of the schoolwide curriculum based on standardized testing (Carter & Lochte, 2017; Connel, 2013; Hunter & Bartee, 2003). In the face of accountability, standards-based assessments and standardized testing has taken center stage in curriculum which means greater focus has been placed on those subject areas that are tested (Kliebard, 1986). Frida and Gloria's description suggests that they and their subject areas are marginalized within the school. Because a heavy focus is placed on "core" subjects, other courses or sports that potentially enrich learning and growth are not offered to these students and limit opportunities to explore their own interests and therefore are not fully able to self-actualize. This finding offers us unique insight into the limits a standardized curriculum has on fostering curiosity and developing an inquiring mind with skills that help students to realize their full capabilities. Lillian also describes the limitations of the school and plans to look at enrichment "outside of school," not so they can transfer, but for lessons in piano or drama, that will further foster inquiry within students and so they are "not limited to what's in school."

Education as a Social Process and for Social Good

Frida, Lillian, Gloria, Sandra, Celia, and Jennifer see education as a social process that helps to improve the individual and social lives of students while also serving a broader social good. The distinction between the social ends of accountability and that of Dewey and Makiguchi is important to make. Both Dewey and Makiguchi disagree that the social outcomes

of school should only serve a practical purpose, where knowledge learned serves only the individual in the problems or issues of today. Dewey adamantly warns against an instrumentalist view of education, whereby education is used to achieve society's goals (Dewey, 1916). In his life, Makiguchi was critical of authoritative practices imposed within education by the Japanese militaristic government of his time (Hatano, 2009). He took such a critical stance against this, that it ultimately led to his arrest and imprisonment as a thought criminal in 1943 (Goulah, 2015).

For Dewey and Makiguchi education has a social means and end. As a social process it helps to develop both the individual and society. In teaching to students' needs, the student's individuality is developed, however it is done so in community with others (Dewey, 1897). Via social participation one develops their sense of identity and understanding of the world. Makiguchi advocates for the "full development of both individuals and society, arguing that individuals develop epistemological empowerment most fully through social engagement and, likewise, that society develops only through such engagement" (Goulah, 2013, p. 26). Social engagement does not only have the potential to transform the individual, but society itself; for social self-actualization, contributive living, and productive social engagement are necessary (Goulah, 2013).

Dewey and Makiguchi recognize how societies help to change and shape individuals, and they also believe in the capacity of individuals to change society. Within the social process of education, one comes to share in the "social consciousness" and "method of social reconstruction" (Dewey, 1897, p. 82). For Dewey, "education is the fundamental method of social progress and reform," therefore learning should be geared toward the welfare of society, this is the democratic ideal (Dewey, 1897, p. 80). For Makiguchi the goal of education should

support the pursuit of authentic happiness through the creation of value, particularly "values of aesthetic or sensory *beauty*, individual *gain*, and social *good* - in and from any circumstances" (Goulah, 2015, p. 254). The very notion promotes education as the most important institution to the well-being of a society and is the "most effective instrument of social progress and reform" (Dewey, 1897, p. 82).

Education as a social process and the improvement of society as a whole is complex and nuanced within these findings. Social interaction is critical in creating value and a democratic experience of education. As previously mentioned, Gloria articulates education as the place for "self-exploration in terms of like who you are, to yourself, to your family, to your community, but also what that means for you," which demonstrates that while students develop their individuality, they are also developing in relation to others. Celia sees this as the development of the "citizen" in participation with others. She wants her students to develop speaking and writing skills, for example, which she believes will allow them to "manage spaces in conversations that are probably things that you don't agree with. But you can respect someone's opinion and you can also present yours in a respectful manner." The development of the self or of skills is in relation to others.

Celia wants her students to be "woke." This is a current sociopolitical term concerning the awareness of social justice issues. All participants refer to social inequalities as a way to frame their philosophies of education, a topic I delve into later. I, however, use it here in light of the social process and social outcome these teachers see as the purpose of education. Celia, Sandra, and Jennifer, reflect a great deal on the social realities of students' lives. For Celia and Sandra specifically, the curriculum is used as a way to shed light on social disparities. These teachers actively use literature as a way to bring to light the realities of marginalized groups.

The use of literature to bring to light social inequalities are not for the simple sake of awareness. Celia describes a greater social purpose,

> *I want them to be active citizens in our society and part of being an active citizen is being educated and not just in the sense of I got a degree, like educated in what's going on on your block, what's going on in your neighborhood, your city, your country, your state. And then making your voice be heard and questioning things like, that's not OK. I'm going to go to this march, or I'm going to go vote, or I'm going to go call somebody, or I'm going to go sign up for this thing.*

Celia deliberately implements social issues into her curriculum so that students come into the "social consciousness" of those within their community, but also as a way to galvanize social progress and reform. This is further illustrated when Frida's discusses her hopes of "giving back." This, as I mentioned in chapter one, was also a family and cultural expectation for me as it was for Frida. She explains that her friends and family ask her "why do you want to do so much more?" because she is beginning her doctorate. She explains,

> *I want to do more so that my students and the people around me can have more. If I do more then that means I can give them more. And if I give them more then it's a cycle. And that's the only way I think our society, especially our community, is going to be successful.*

The concept of giving back to her community is not simply a model that she lives by, she also expects this of her students as demonstrated in the use of the word "cycle." Education as serving a social good is also seen when Gloria says she wants students to "ultimately find something you're passionate about" and dedicate themselves to "further that field, whatever that field may be."

These teachers see the possibilities of education to produce a better society and use the curriculum as a way to shed light on societal dysfunctions and needs for change. These teachers articulate the want for students to not simply be spectators within the society they exist, but active agents, unafraid and unhindered, in their ability to contribute to societal change. The subordination to a predetermined trajectory for one's life creates individuals incapable of criticality and reflection. Vocational aims of education help to create "docile compliance with authoritarian work and political structures" and discourages the pursuit of individual and communal inquiry (Talebi, 2015, p. 6). Findings made within critical theory suggest that the broader implications of accountability reform efforts act to reproduce social inequalities and maintain the same dysfunctions these teachers hope to change (Apple, 2009).

Student-Teacher Relationship and the Role of the Urban Setting

The student-teacher relationship is particularly important for the teachers in this study. Each approach relationship building differently, some use their curriculum and pedagogy as an entry way while others use interpersonal exchanges to form a connection with students. This particular finding helps to answer multiple questions within my research, including how teachers describe their experiences teaching in a charter school in the context of neoliberal accountability politics, how their identity is implicated in the teaching process, and as a vivid example of how these teachers subscribe to the educational philosophies resonant with Dewey and Makiguchi. I choose to present it here because the teachers in this study express the importance of relationship building with the same sentiment as that of Makiguchi. I also choose to present it here because these teachers express a unique connection between urban societal inequalities and the need for intimate relationships between student and teacher for teaching and learning.

In his publication *On Attitudes toward Education* (1936), Makiguchi asserts that a critical aspect of value-creating pedagogy is the role of the teacher. He maintains that the attitude or spirit of the teacher must embody that of a servant in order to foster "creative and critically engaged individuals" (Goulah, 2015, p. 256). With the spirit of a servant, a teacher first observes and then caters to the student's needs. A teacher must support a students' agentive meaning-making through mentorship, and look to students for the answers that can guide and cultivate student learning. In his publication *Cultivating Chrysanthemums* (2015), Goulah describes the metaphor Makiguchi uses to represent the attitude a teacher should have toward students. This metaphor was taken from a haiku by Yosa Buson which likens the student-teacher relationship to a flower and a grower. In speaking to teachers, he writes "You, chrysanthemum grower, are a servant of chrysanthemums!" Makiguchi writes,

> *"unless one fully becomes a servant of chrysanthemums, discerning what they crave and obediently complying with their commands, the results will be poor, no matter how strenuous one's exertions using one's own particular methods. ...In other words, in terms of the techniques of cultivating chrysanthemums, in order to freely realize one's goal of bringing flowers to bloom, one must set aside one's own will and faithfully and obediently accord [one's efforts] to the chrysanthemum's nature, following the laws of its life. Barring this, after a year's time it will be clear to anyone that any amount of artifice has been absolutely futile, and thus one is left only with the choice between obeying [the nature of the chrysanthemum] and succeeding, or working against [this nature] and giving up [hope of success]" (Makiguchi [1936] 1981-88, vol. 9 8-9, p. 245).*

Teachers must, therefore, understand their students and their students' nature. The attitude of the teacher can be reflected in the learning attitude of the student. The learning process possesses two parts to the whole – the teacher and the student. Thus, what a student learns is a reflection of both the learner (himself/herself) and the teacher. In the role of learning, the teacher may initially take the lead, but Makiguchi stresses the importance of allowing students to take over this process. In this way, students are able to begin creating value (Goulah, 2015).

The attitude of the teacher or the student-teacher relationship is not part of the neoliberal discourse of education, as it conceptualizes teachers as "deskilled deliverers of knowledge and students are passive recipients of decontextualized knowledge" (Inukai, 2018, p. 283). Building an environment for learning and growth is difficult and contextualized. The narratives of these teachers illustrate the difficulty in pushing forward with a curriculum based on accountability measures or otherwise. These teachers express the importance of the student-teacher relationship within education and take on a humanistic approach in understanding the full humanity of their students. This finding helps to shed light on the layered and complex nature of interpersonal exchange, the importance of the attitude of the teacher, and the interplay and agency of student and teacher actors who co-create an environment conducive to learning.

Frida expresses this spirit of a chrysanthemum grower in building relationships based on "love and high expectations." Her humanist approach means she takes the time to "listen" and "check in with students." She is incredibly conscientious about their everyday experiences and the process of education because the realities of today "affect our students in a much more intense way than when we used to be in school." Frida warns against holding grudges when students do something wrong. She considers this a "big hurdle" in building relationships because

it is important for a teacher to understand "that every day they are a new student they are having a new day," and whatever they did is "not them. That was something they did, that was them. But every day for them, they are changing because every day they're learning." Frida uses compassion, with high-expectations to understand students, even those not on her caseload. She cares about the well-being of her students, observes, and then tries to cater to their needs.

Celia and Sandra also believe in high-expectations. The curriculum is the source of relationship building. As Celia describes, this is intentionally planned because she believes it is very important that "students see themselves in what they're learning," and for Celia it is also important that she sees herself in what she is teaching. She therefore focuses her curriculum on "social justice" and the use of "female authors" who are generally not included in "the canon." She also chooses texts that "relate to the communities they belong to," including that from [this city], African American, Latino, or LGTBQ communities to make connections and have students "see" the parallels. In this way, relationship building becomes a reciprocal experience. Celia finds value in her curriculum and uses local communities as a means to have students create value. The curriculum, when carefully crafted, makes her more "approachable" as students are able to see her critical reflection, thought, and effort in pushing forward a curriculum that matters to her, yet is relevant to their lives. Celia allowed for students to see her as a mentor, "I do think that because of the curriculum, students are able to respect me and trust me, which I think is cool about relationships." She understands the intricacy of human interaction and possesses the ability, as a teacher, to accurately read or understand the entire scope of student-teacher interactions so that neither relationship building nor the curriculum is sacrificed.

Relationship building, as Frida, Celia, and Sandra explain is a mutual and a deeply difficult process that is often not discussed in education, particularly not within neoliberal

discourses. This topic as it relates to my research was a surprising theme that arose within my study. None of the research I conducted on accountability, neoliberalism, educational policy, or the history of education focused on the intimacy of learning. These discourses are removed from the understanding of learning. What Dewey and Makiguchi recognize within the student is a deep level of agency, not just in the learning process, but in the course of their lived experiences. Learning, like relationship building, is an active process and students have the say, voice, or choice to engage or disengage in that process. While primary and secondary education is compulsory, students are able to actively resist or accept what is being taught. This agency is made evident in student-teacher relationships.

One quote that particularly stood out to me was when Celia described the use of her carefully formed curriculum to make her more approachable, she said, “I do think that because of the curriculum, students are able to respect me and trust me, which I think is cool about relationships.” Celia did not describe relationship building in the same way as Frida - as needing to listen to the stories and experiences of students in order to demonstrate care, love, or interest for their well-being and learning- but rather she uses her craft as a teacher and understanding of human interaction to make transparent her intentions via the curriculum. When Celia says, “which is cool about relationships,” she is referring to the idea that there is no single way to build relationships, but access and entry into the student-teacher relationship can be achieved through multiple means and important elements of a mutual relationship, such as trust and respect, are achieved and are needed within the learning process.

While also considering the curriculum in the development of student-teacher relationships, Sandra considers the role of the teacher within an urban setting. Five of the six teachers reference the importance of the urban setting within their interviews. All six of these

teachers grew up within such a setting. As mentioned in the findings, this word was not simply used as a descriptor of place or location but also carried deeper and significant meanings for the lived experiences of both teachers and students. Within her description of the purpose of education, Sandra differentiates the role of an urban teacher from that of other teachers when she says,

> *I believe that we who serve in urban settings, are tasked with the responsibility of exposing our kids to all challenges that are comparable to what students in wealthier school districts are exposed to but providing them with the right supports and scaffolds to access them and experience success.*

This description is grounded in ideas of poverty, social injustice, and inequalities.

Jennifer also describes the important distinction between affluent communities and those who attend school in urban settings. She's observed a great deal of teacher turnover and she explained it this way,

> *You either know how to create relationships with your students or you're not going to make it." She explains, "that is the difference between urban education and for me, like suburban education. You've got to learn how to build those relationships.*

Jennifer and Sandra refer to the "trauma" and "turmoil" their students experience, which makes learning difficult. When thinking about a student who is, for example, not sitting up in their seat Sandra asks, "have you thought about whether they have had a meal this morning or whether they were up to 3am in the emergency room because so-and-so was hurt?" Jennifer also describes the experience of one of her students, "I had some other student this year where mom was in a relationship with a guy and ended up breaking up with him. This crazy guy ends up gunning down their apartment."

For these teachers, it is important to understand the urban setting and the harsh realities of students' lives. Jennifer's compassion is displayed in her humanist approach, "I think just a genuine 'good morning.'" For her, consistency and caring is key, "they don't know what somebody actually caring about them for no reason and giving them something for no reason is." Jennifer further describes the critically of the student-teacher relationship,

> *Literally give them the time because nobody gives them the time. They don't have that at home. You know, they've got five, six siblings maybe at home. Mom works, you know, late and nobody sees them. They're probably the ones raising their brothers and sisters. So, nobody ever worries about them. You know, so that one teacher to build that relationship with you, "you made me feel special, you give me the time, I'm going to love that teacher because she gave me the time." That might be it. You know, I mean, you have kids who have it all at home. You really do. You don't have to make. But there are kids in our school that unless you are willing to make that, you're not going to make it. You know, they will drive your day to a living hell because they will try you every day. But once you make that relationship, they're going to be your biggest advocate.*

Like Celia, Jennifer also addresses student agency in building a relationship with a teacher and the accessibility that lends itself to an environment conducive of learning.

The significance of these findings is found in the importance these teachers place on the student-teacher relationship within teaching. For them the disparities within urban conditions are particularly difficult for students. Makiguchi calls on teachers to have particular attitudes that help them to create a safe, learning environment in which students are able to create value. Such a humanist approach is demonstrated by these teachers in which interpersonal skills are used to understand who their students are, and a deeper understanding of the ways in which human

interactions work to co-create an environment conducive for learning. The student-teacher dynamic is not part of the neoliberal discourse. It would require an acknowledgement that barriers exist in the implementation of a standardized curriculum. The intricate and profound knowledge these teachers possess require learned skills and a reconceptualized vision of the teachers' role.

Revisiting Research Question 2

Question 2: How do these teachers describe their experiences teaching in a charter school in the context of neoliberal accountability politics?

There were two significant findings within this research that help to describe the experiences of these teachers in the Midwest Charter Network within the context of neoliberal accountability politics. First, these teachers describe having positive experiences that are personally and professionally fulfilling. These positive experiences result in them staying within the network. The second finding, although seemingly contradictory, is the critique these teachers describe on the overwhelming focus of accountability via standardization within the curriculum, high-stakes testing, and discipline. The last finding, I include here is the idea of engaged resistance. These teachers, while under the pressures of accountability, are able not only to meet the requirements of accountability measures within the network, but also to push back against these pressures within their curriculum and pedagogy to resist and challenge these structures.

Positive Experiences within the Midwest Charter Network

When these teachers were asked to describe their teaching experiences within their school, its overall culture, or what charter schools offer them that other schools may not, teachers offered positive experiences. Five of these teachers find their work within the network personally fulfilling, which includes relationships with other teachers and students, the support of

administrators, the potential for growth and leadership in their professional careers, or freedom within the curriculum.

Unlike my own experience, which got progressively harder while in the network, I was surprised to hear the satisfaction these teachers describe in their experience within the network. Gloria, who is in her first year, finds it to be a great place to grow professionally. Her colleagues are not just supportive of her, but also want to "help students." She describes them as "really passionate" and always available for "feedback," which makes it a great place to learn and become a better teacher. Celia describes a growing "push to have development throughout the school," for teachers to grow professionally. She also describes her colleagues as "really motivated to ensure the growth of their students."

Sandra expresses how the culture of the school provides "consistency," particularly surrounding classroom management. For Sandra this provides a positive and supportive school culture, particularly from an academic perspective. She described having experienced "conflict with just making sure kids were paying attention," where she previously worked. She said they were in her class, but questioned if they were in "science class," or in "math class" and if they were not, then "what does that mean for their entire education?" For Sandra, discipline policies within the school ensure learning, more so than no discipline policies and for her, it allows her to fulfill her role as a teacher. Sandra also brings up the support she receives while transitioning into motherhood. The school offers her a separate and comfortable room for a breast pumping station and allows her to have her off the first and last periods of the day because of her long commutes. For Sandra, this is vital to a personal and work life balance.

Jennifer expresses love for her school. She has the full support of her administration because she is able to get results. Jennifer strongly aligns with a standardized curriculum that

helps students perform well on tests. She also sees standardization as the way to provide students with an equitable education. The higher students perform on standardized testing, the more likely they are to get into better colleges which in turn, she believes, will give them a better life. Because Jennifer is able to get her students to score so well on standardized tests, she experiences a great deal of support. She explains it this way, "My administrator fully respects me and I feel like we're a school as long as you show up with the data, they will never say no to you."

This finding is reflective of the contention I found in these participants' answers surrounding several topics. Gloria is the only teacher in this study in her first year in the network, but all others have been there 3 years or longer. All, except Lillian, express confidence in the schools' ability to help students succeed, feel supported, or are inspired by colleagues and the culture of the school. Different reasons bring them personal satisfaction within their role as teacher in the network, and these very reasons may result in the exact opposite experience for another teacher. In other words, these teachers demonstrate how the feelings of satisfaction within the workplace is a highly individualized preference. What is fulfilling and brings happiness to one teacher in this study, does not necessarily do the same for another teacher. For example, I, too, loved working within the network. The harder I saw my colleagues push to become better, the more I was inspired to do the same. Like Gloria, administration began to observe my classes with the purposes of intentional reflection on my part and to help me think critically about my curriculum and pedagogy. This process, however, reached a point of diminishing return. I began to struggle because with every observation and reflection on ways to improve, the overwhelming message became just that - I needed improvement. I no longer felt

capable, and after my sixth year of teaching I continued to always feel as though I was doing something wrong.

The experience that Gloria enjoys and helps her to grow professionally, and that I once enjoyed, became the very experience that made me leave. While there is common overlap in the positive experiences of working within the network in these teachers, this finding is not particularly supportive of recent efforts on behalf of teachers to unionize within the network. The network experiences high teacher turnover rates, and in the effort to unionize felt they needed "a voice in decisions, stability in our schools." Since these efforts the network has not unionized.

The Critique of Accountability within the Midwest Charter Network

Accountability in various forms was a recurring theme in these findings. While questions were explicitly asked that led to understanding of other questions of this study, no question explicitly asked about accountability measures. This theme helps to understand how these teachers describe their experiences teaching in a charter school in the context of neoliberal accountability politics. Topics such as testing, data analysis, college, and a standardized curriculum arose within the accounts of these teachers. When I asked if there was anything preventing them from fulfilling their philosophy of education, these teachers express conflict between the culture of the network that centers on accountability measures and trying to execute their personal philosophy of education. As mentioned within the findings, the ethos of the network centers on standardization, however some schools within the network do so more than others. The conflict is greater for some than for others and this depends on the teachers' philosophy of education, how these teachers value testing and students' scores, and the content area they teach.

Because these participants express concern with accountability measures this finding appears to be in direct conflict with the positivity these teachers also express in the previous discussion. This finding, however, illustrates how these teachers are able to simultaneously experience satisfaction and happiness within teaching while also being able to critique the system in which they reside. Accountability measures is by far the biggest critique these teachers express in their experiences in the network. Below, I provide several examples of how accountability arises in their teaching as well as the reasons for contention. Below, I discuss the perspectives on a sort of continuum in an effort to show the varying perspectives. I begin with Jennifer who is in full support of accountability measures within her curriculum and pedagogy. I then continue with those teachers least affected by accountability measures, Frida and Gloria. I discuss Sandra and Celia's perspective who are immersed in accountability but are able to implement a curriculum and pedagogy they are comfortable with. These teachers will be the primary focus of another finding that also emerged and helps to answer how teachers describe their experiences teaching in a charter school in the context of neoliberal accountability politics, called Engaged Resistance. I conclude with Lillian's experience, who by far, expresses frustration and even anger with accountability measures.

As previously mentioned, my own curriculum and pedagogy in my World History class was implicated in accountability efforts. Although I considered myself to be a periphery teacher whose content area was not "tested" on standardized tests, I felt an overwhelming sense of pressure to conform to accountability measures. When I initially began this study, I wanted to only get the perspectives of "core" teachers, as Gloria refers to them, whose subjects are directly measured on tests. Due to limited access to participants, however, I was unable to do so. The participants in this study, however, present interesting and insightful perspectives that may have

otherwise not been offered had this study only been limited to "core" teachers. While four teachers in this study, Jennifer, Celia, Sandra, and Lillian, are core teachers, a more in-depth study of these teachers should be the focus of future research as the perspectives of these teachers who are primarily affected by standardization vary and provide a wealth of perspectives - in support of and against accountability measures. The teachers in this study vary in their perspectives on the ways in which accountability efforts affect teachers.

Jennifer expresses full support of standardization in schools. Common Core State Standards are for her the way to provide students with "an equitable education." In her experience of traveling throughout the United States, she found drastic disparities in educational experiences between different states. Common Core, for Jennifer, is "the answer" in providing students with "equal" learning opportunities. Her stance supports the dominant discourse in which standards are believed to provide students with an "equal" education in which all students are then given equal opportunities (Darling-Hammond, 2004; Levinson, 2012; Vinson, 2001). An important caveat to Jennifer's beliefs is that she recognizes how access to college leads to opportunities beyond college (e.g. more job options, higher income, access to resources, etc.) that helps her students to achieve self-actualization. Jennifer's focus reflects her understanding of societal inequalities. By tailoring her curriculum and pedagogy to one that helps students achieve higher scores on standardized tests, she explains it "warms your heart to know that they're going to go to a better school and they're going to have better opportunities because of this." Jennifer, therefore finds value in testing, and her ability to meet accountability expectations means her students will be able to have a better life.

Standardized testing is for the purposes of college acceptance. Standards, such as the College Readiness Standards or the Common Core State Standards, when implemented into the

curriculum and become the primary guide for learning in the classroom limits students to a one path trajectory into college and does not allow for individuality. Frida does not believe college is for everyone. This is not because she does not think highly of her students or that they are not intellectually capable, she finds that college is simply one path students are able to take in their lives. Those students who do not want to enter college whether because of personal preference or extraneous life circumstances are "set up for failure," as Lillian describes. As mentioned previously, these teachers believe education should help a student in the process of self-actualization and exposure to individual interests or courses that cultivate that interest is important - and lacking under standardization. Frida and Lillian also express that under standardization, those students who do not conform to the college trajectory are not offered needed resources to be successful in the endeavors they choose. This is not only an example of the narrowing of curriculum, but the narrowing of life choices that result in broader societal inequalities that act to reproduce a society in which some continue to be marginalized throughout the course of the life-span.

Gloria is the only teacher in this study whose curriculum and pedagogy are not affected by standardized testing. She, however, uses her humanist approach to critique its purpose in school and finds it concerning that a test score is used to make important decisions that affect a student's life course. Because test scores implicate college acceptance, her role as a college counselor gives her insight into the long-term implications of testing in the classroom. She calls her own role "high-stakes" because her work with students in the college application process determines or influences life-long opportunities (e.g. more money and resources, better career opportunities, job security, personal benefits, etc.). Gloria brings up a more concerning issue for the immediate effects of accountability measures when she states, "it builds a sort of pipeline"

that negatively affects “students of color.” She is referring to discipline when she says, “a lot of students have really negative experiences in schools. Sometimes maybe what they need is counseling and not a disciplinary consequence.” A growing body of research exists to support her assertion that accountability efforts have negative academic implications (Cramer et al., 2018).

Sandra and Celia also critique accountability measures within their schools. As teachers whose subject area is tested on standardized testing. Sandra describes testing as a “huge challenge,” and feeling “torn” between teaching something “creative,” or having to answer to the test, so she does her best to figure out ways in which she is able to implement curriculum that both aligns to the test while also challenging students in ways that build critical thinking beyond the test. Celia, too, expresses a schoolwide focus on tests. In her first years within the network, she struggled to venture away from test preparation in her curriculum, however, her and Sandra also describe that experience allows them to implement, more and more, a curriculum they believe both meets the standards of the test but also provides a democratic experience in which students are able to create value. These two teachers focus their curriculum on the voices of marginalized groups in an effort to implement critical thinking around social justice issues while also meeting the expectation of the test, so that students are able to have access to college and other opportunities that accountability measures provide.

Each quarter, students take an interim exam. Teachers complete an intensive data analysis, which I described in chapter 1. All campuses come together and review the data across the network. All sophomore English teachers sat in one room, all junior math teachers sat in one room, and so on. This experience was meant to be collaborative; a place where teachers could share best practices around curriculum and pedagogy - what worked, what did not work.

Teachers often presented different pedagogical strategies surrounding content and skills they implemented to facilitate learning and growth. The teachers who often presented were those from schools with the best scores. While looking at your data, you could not help but to notice how you did relative to others. This, I imagine, was also the same feeling teachers felt from schools who consistently did not do well. Those schools that consistently had the lowest scores were the schools who served predominantly African American students. These are the schools that Jennifer and Lillian work in. While Jennifer is able to thrive in that environment, Lillian expresses struggle.

Lillian struggles the most with accountability measures. She articulates a more extreme experience with accountability that affects both academic and disciplinary experiences in the classroom. Lillian initially felt "micromanaged" in her execution of curriculum and pedagogy. Taubman (2009) refers to this as audit culture in which teachers lose their autonomy in the classroom. Lillian describes a form of surveillance that resulted in her having to submit scripted lesson plans to her curriculum instructor which provided a step-by-step rundown of how she would be teaching skills needed to get higher scores on the SAT. She describes how this got so bad that she eventually had the curriculum instructor make all her lesson plans for her. This was a full restructuring of her curriculum, by someone else, Lillian reminded me, who did not teach math, but once taught English. Initially compliance with neoliberal forms of education seemed the safer option. As she continued to work within her school, she simply told her administration she would no longer be able to work there if she is "micromanaged" in the same way she had been in the past. Lillian continues to work in her school after this experience and no longer experiences the kind of pressure she once did in her curriculum and pedagogy due to accountability measures.

All teachers in this study describe testing as an overwhelming focus of the school. The only accounts I found to be most surprising is that of Sandra and Celia. Their comfort and ability to both implement a curriculum that meets accountability efforts and one that I would consider fosters a democratic environment in which students are able to create value is surprising.

The Critique of Discipline within the Midwest Charter Network

This finding suggests that discipline is deeply related to accountability measures. The implementation of strict behavior policies is believed to facilitate learning and create a safe environment for students to be academically successful (Midwest Charter Network, 2019). The label of discipline is nuanced, and I use it here because that was the word used by these participants, but was also the all-encompassing word used to address rules and policies within the building when I was there. The teachers in this study address discipline within their interviews in various ways. While this was not an intentional focus of mine, through the analysis of data I began to see how intimately connected discipline is to academic performance and the accountability measures set in place by the network. I use the following personal narratives to explain its complex relationship between academic achievement, the beliefs of these teachers, and as a way to consider broader implications for this finding.

When I worked for the network, I ran an after-school program called LaSalle. Students who did not complete homework assignments were required to stay after school to then complete the homework with me. This program was named after LaSalle Street in Chicago which houses the business or financial district. The idea is that “you don’t go home until the work gets done,” like those who work in business. It was a requirement that students stay, as completing

homework is believed to foster academic achievement. However, if a student did not stay or comply, they received a detention. The program was school-wide and put in place to support teachers' curriculum by encouraging homework completion, establishing better working habits, and to hold students accountable for their own learning, but was deemed punitive by some. Several critiques came up during the time I was there including the rigidity of having to stay the day a student did not complete the homework assignment and the lack of flexibility for understanding a student's after-school obligations. Concerns were raised about students leaving school at 5:00pm, and having to travel home at night to different and often unsafe neighborhoods or issues with weather and student safety. The reasons for why a student got LaSalle also varied - for example some teachers required students to stay if one problem was not completed on an assignment. The idea behind this was to establish high expectations for one's work ethic and to encourage students to at least attempt all questions, even those they did not understand. Disciplinary action was taken to reinforce such behavior.

Demerits and detentions came up throughout these teachers' interviews. Each infraction, or policy that was broken, warrants demerits, and for every 4 demerits, a detention is "earned" within a two-week period. When I worked for the network, detentions were 3 hours after school during shortened days, and students were able to "earn" multiple detentions within a two-week period. The 2019-2020 student handbook says "demerits are one tool of accountability intended to 1) encourage habits of self-discipline in individual students, 2) promote and protect physical and emotional safety for all community members, and 3) uphold school cleanliness" (Midwest Charter Network, 2019). In a simple search throughout the handbook (49 pages), the word detention was printed 57 times and the word demerit was printed 47 times. I provide this extensive list of demerits students are able to "earn" to illustrate the number of policies students

must follow, the subjectivity in the number of demerits a student might receive, and because I believe this list demonstrates the punitive school environment these teachers describe. Students are able to "earn" infractions for tardiness (to school and to classes) (<1 min. = 1 demerit 1-3 min. = 2 demerits >3 min. = 4 demerits), unexcused absences (4 demerits), academic dishonesty (4 demerits), dress code violations (1 demerit if corrected, 4 demerits and Character Academy if not corrected), consuming soda, caffeinated energy drinks, or chips (2 demerits), off-task behavior (1 demerit), visible, audible, or use of cell phones (4 demerits and confiscation of the device), leaving school or class without permission (4 demerits), throwing objects (2 demerits), talking during a fire drill (2 demerits), being in a hallway without an escort when one is required (4 demerits), foul language (1-4 demerits), disruptive behavior (1-4 demerits), using a non-transparent water bottle (1 demerit), inappropriate public displays of affection(1-4 demerits), not following campus specific requirements for student ID requirements (1 demerit), disciplinary class removal (4 demerits), chewing gum (4 demerits), eating or drinking outside the lunch room (2 demerits), not cleaning up after one's self (2 demerits), damage to school property (1-4 demerits), and more.

While some infractions receive a set number of demerits, subjectivity in the number of demerits was often up to the discretion of the teacher or staff member issuing the infraction. I however, use the word "earn" because this was the language used when I was there to place blame and hold students accountable rather than the teacher. At a staff Christmas party one year, teachers were split into teams to play a game. One previously designated staff member developed trivia questions surrounding demerits and detentions and potential student scenarios. One example went something like "A student shows up two minutes late to school, uses the word "fuck" but instead of saying "fuck you" they say "oh, fuck, I'm late to class." How many

demerits and/or detentions does that student get? All teachers wanted to be on the winning team which, of course, was with the dean of discipline. Except, no one won, because no one could agree on the number of demerits this hypothetical student should receive for using the word "fuck," or how they used it – even the dean who was responsible for enforcing the consequence.

Teachers, administrators, and other supporting staff participated in this "game." It raised questions and ethical concerns for me. Adults, including myself, developed, imposed, and enforced these policies within the school and those at its mercy were students, children, minors. We were acting subjects in an incredibly subjective and ambiguously designed system and students were asked to navigate it daily and were being held accountable when not following how we deemed appropriate. The outcomes of not being able to navigate it well were high-stakes and we were making fun of it. This party took place roughly 8 years ago. Critiques surrounding this system have taken place since its inception. Below are the contentious feelings surrounding disciplinary policies. Teachers on the one hand see how it oppresses students, denies them of critical rights, and is potentially hurtful, but also how it helps teaching and learning. Changes surrounding discipline are currently being implemented within the network.

The critiques these teachers discuss are both their own and the rising discourse which has resulted from parent pushback and teachers surrounding the punitive nature of discipline within the network. Sandra raises the critique of where and from whom such policies derived. Her discontent with the dress code students must follow "was created by like a white man you know and sometimes it can be a little rigid. I do think it's a problematic and racist issue." Similarly, Jennifer also describes how the network has "been shunned upon because kids couldn't go to the bathroom without getting to a demerit." Lillian specifically expresses discontent of the

disciplinary system, which works against her students because the freshman “hate” the demerits and the “system,” and describe it as a “prison,” because they are always being told what to do and believe teachers are there simply to “punish them.” Lillian says this is when the “weeding out starts to happen where I know that some of them are not coming back their sophomore year because they don't want to have to deal with it.” The pressures on students are difficult and result in students not returning to the school. Lillian’s frustration was further amplified when talking about the number of detentions and how it used to result in student’s not being able to promote, “So where I think it was 40 detentions, you couldn’t promote to sophomore year even if you had straight A’s, which is fuckin’ ridiculous, fuckin’ ridiculous.” These examples display the punitive nature of the disciplinary system, but also broader issues that cross lines of race that prevent particular students from experiencing academic achievement within such a disciplinary system (Whisman, 2014).

Aside from the learning curve that students must go through, these teachers describe that they must also do the same during their first year of employment within the network. Jennifer described her experience as “hell,” because when you are new to the network, it “is unlike any other institution,” because “you don’t know the rules, there’s so many rules and so many policies. And these kids know it back and forth because they know about the demerits and merits,” therefore the “the work that you have to put in is unlike any other.”

As a result of many of the critiques, Sandra explains, “there are so many things that are being changed at our school,” and from the accounts of other teachers, a push for diversity, equity, and inclusion is being made which impacts the discipline within the network. A growing body of research suggests that extreme discipline practices are linked to low levels of academic achievement.

Engaged Resistance

Accountability pressures were a recurring theme among these teachers, however some who previously struggled with accountability measures in their curriculum found that they are able to implement a standards-based approach without sacrificing a democratic or value-creating curriculum. This was a surprising theme as teachers believe that the experience they gained in the classroom allows them to negotiate their curriculum and pedagogy in such a way that meets both accountability measures and provides an education that aligns more with that of Dewey's democratic education and Makiguchi's value-creating education.

Makiguchi saw the development of "critical modes of knowing - a clear understanding of how society, politics, and economics function - as the key to bringing about a more humane social and political order" (Gerbert, 2009, p. 160). He believed the cultivation of analytical skills would help students to evaluate society for what it really is to create value through the current context of the time, standards-based learning. Like the teachers in this study, he was entrenched in an educational system that in many ways parallels neoliberal reform efforts in the United States which severely restricted his curricular and pedagogical practices. While being critical of the "examination hell" his students faced, Makiguchi worked at changing the immediate experience of education for himself and his students. Goulah (2013) recounts Makiguchi's efforts at developing students' composition skills within a rigid and strict standard within Japan. Within the confines of standards-based restrictions, Makiguchi developed a model that fostered critical literacy development (see Goulah, 2015). Governmental policies narrowed and restricted the educational environment in which he taught. While he contested these structures, he was able to push back against them curricularly and pedagogically through what Goulah calls "engaged resistance". I have labeled this section after Goulah's concept and use the narratives of my

participants to demonstrate how they too have learned to actively engage resistance within the classroom.

Antonio Gramsci reminds us that there always exist challenges to dominant ideas (Slattery, 2003). The teachers in this study named one critical component in being able to resist or disrupt top-down policies within their classroom and that was their experience. While it is not simply the passage of time, time in the classroom gave them experience in their field allowing them to reimagine possibilities for change and transformation within their practice. In moving from novice to expert, personal philosophies and modes of thinking presented opportunities for challenging long-held assumptions. Experience enabled these teachers to reflect upon beliefs and understandings in light of new experiences.

Teachers like Celia and Sandra want to develop students' criticality, but in many ways experienced accountability pressures. These teachers find they are able to negotiate the institutional hurdles of accountability while also using practical knowledge of their craft to implement the kind of curriculum and pedagogy that in many ways challenges accountability measures.

When asked if there is anything preventing her from achieving what she believes is the purpose of education, Celia said the typical answer is "the test that you take at the end of the year in order to validate everything that you did, and did students grow?" and "educators feel like they can't deter from their path because they have to meet a bunch of deadlines like benchmarks that their school, or district, or state, or city gives them." Sandra also expressed being "torn" between wanting to do a really "creative thing" and having to "answer to the test scores." When Celia told her supervisor she wanted to implement what she called "light and fluffy and wonderful stuff," she was told "those are great ideas, but remember you have to grow at the end

of the year." When asked if she still felt this way, Celia expresses that she was in her first few years of teaching when that happened and was therefore "scared" to take such "risks." However, the longer she has been a teacher the more she "grew in my own personal confidence of risk," and is happy when she tries something new even if it did not work, she understands where to make "tweaks." Sandra said standardization guides it "less and less every year," because,

> *I know with experience, I've been able to shift my focus on if they can develop these reading skills they will do fine on the tests. So, it's still aligned, but I know that getting that test score isn't like a bunch of practice tests, it's like practicing like synthesizing in this level of difficult text that you can still kind of like meet those test scores.*

When asked if she is able to implement the "light and fluffy and wonderful stuff," Celia said she does. What she has learned however is that, "it's not like a trade-off." She describes,

> *I understand that I still have a job to do and I think I am more invested in that job where I do have to grow 30 points. And that is my mission because I understand the opportunity, because I understand the game of education where you have to grow in order to get into college, which would hopefully open more opportunities in the future.*

Both Celia and Sandra's overall philosophy of education align with that of Dewey and Makiguchi. In their interviews they critique accountability measures, but also see that they must offer their students an education in which they are both able to succeed in the system in which they reside, while also challenging it. This form of engaged resistance illustrates how teachers practice agency to provide an environment in which they are able to create value and a democratic educational experience, while also working to change the system in which they reside.

Revisiting Research Question 3

Question 3: How is their identity implicated in the teaching process?

As presented under finding 1, the significance of personal identity plays a role in the professional lives of these teachers. Personal identity permeates their curriculum, pedagogy, and educational philosophies. Who these teachers are as an individual person, what they feel, or their own experiences shape their roles as teachers. Personal identity is implicated in the professional self of these participants. Gender, race, ethnicity, class, and personally oppressive experiences are at the fore of these teacher's personal and professional selves and guide their ideas about education and its purpose. Identity is addressed in this section and helps to explain how the personal self and the professional self are inseparable and is therefore implicated in the teaching process as well as in all other findings within this study.

Teacher Identity: The Personal and Professional Self

Identity formation is an individual, personalized, and contextualized journey in which we develop ourselves through time. This results in an ever-changing, varied, and dynamic self (Mockler, 2011). Socially, these set of meanings define who we are when we occupy a particular role in society (Burke & Stets, 2009). Because we are able to change from moment to moment and context to context, we carry multiple identities connected to a place and time. As we are ever-engaging in the social world, we are able to hold multiple sets of meanings about the self and these can include experiences related to class, race, and gender. Akkerman and Meijer (2011) refer to this as the holding of multiple I-positions that are always in a "dialogical relationship of inter-subjective exchange and temporary dominance" (p. 312).

What this suggests is that the role of a teacher is not neutral. While a teachers' role "encapsulates the things the teacher does in performing the functions required of her/him as a

teacher, teacher identity is a more personal thing and indicates how one identifies with being a teacher and how one feels as a teacher" (Walkington, 2005, p. 54). A teacher's identity encompasses one's core personal beliefs and these are continuously formed and reformed through experience. The character of multiplicity within identity holds true for teachers and its development is also a non-linear process that takes shape over the course of one's career (Mockler, 2011). The teacher self is created and recreated via social interaction within a "socio-cultural, historical, and institutional context" (Zembylas, 2003, p. 213). The educational contexts which include "career histories, professional learning, development experience, features of the particular school and system contexts" help to shape teachers' professional identities (Mockler, 2011, p. 520).

The complex interplay and multidimensional character of the educational environment helps to create teacher identity (Zembylas, 2003). Professional identities, however, are implicated by one's personal identity and teachers are continuously participating in an ongoing negotiation of the multiple I-positions that exist within the teacher self. In the process of developing a teacher identity one must find congruence between professional and personal values (Mockler, 2011). This negotiation touches all aspects of the classroom including curricular and pedagogical practices and becomes evident, for example, in teacher approaches and why classrooms may look so different from one another (Walkington, 2005). Recognizing the multiplicity in teacher identity challenges the assumption that there is "a singular 'teacher self' or an essential 'teacher identity' as promoted by popular notions about teaching - 'such as the idea that teachers are the experts'" (Zembylas, 2003, p. 214).

What teachers do and who they are has often been narrowly defined. The popular notion of a "pointer, chalkboards, authoritative poses, female, Caucasian, etc." has characterized teacher

identity and these notions have been socially-constructed (Alusp, 2006, p. 6). Statistics indicate that this perception represents a largely homogeneous teacher population of mostly Caucasian women that currently exists within the workforce. As identity cuts across personal histories including culture, race, ethnicity, gender, age, experience, and a multitude of other intersections, how does one integrate the personal self with the professional self?

The participants in this study are all Latinas and range in age and experience in their personal and professional lives. When I first began this study, I used the words Hispanic and Latina interchangeably. I have generally referred to myself as Hispanic and was in my 20s when I learned the difference in nuance between the terms explained to me by my father: Hispanic refers to someone who speaks Spanish or who descended from someone who speaks Spanish, and Latina/o as someone who is from or descended from those of Latin America. I am both. Although I assumed identity is important within the role of a teacher, and contributed to many of my own frustrations in education, as indicated in my text to Christian, it was not until I engaged in this research that I realized the extent to which one's personal identity is inseparable from their professional identity. In my interview with Gloria, I asked her about the ways in which being Hispanic plays a role in her teaching. Her response was,

> *I don't identify with the label Hispanic. Personally, I don't think it's a label that we chose to be a part of. I know it's a government thing. It's a census thing, but that label comes from a place of privilege*.

I was immediately shocked and apologetic.

Gloria's response immediately changed me, and my assumptions about this research. Her response addresses historical and political issues that shape identity. I am grateful for her blunt answer to my question and as a result I needed to work through my mistaken assumptions,

expectations, and the ways in which I approached questioning. I asked questions like how do you ethically identify?, or are there labels such as Hispanic or Latina that you prefer? This sometimes raised more questions but allowed for participants to self-identify rather than me impose a label upon them. Lillian, for example, responded with "Puerto Rican and Polish," and later in my interview with Gloria, she also referred to herself as Latina, Chicana, and Mexicana. The conversations or questions about identity were highly individualized and personal, as a result, I used the terms offered by participants to ask any further questions. All participants in this study used the word Latina, and like me, Jennifer used Hispanic and Latina interchangeably. When I initially proposed this study, I used the word Latino but since changed it to Latina. In the Spanish language, nouns are gendered (male or female). Masculine nouns end in o and feminine nouns end in an a. The letter o is also assigned to nouns as a gender-neutral term when, for example, one is referring to a group of males and females. Although I had hoped to have a variety of participants, only females participated. The change in this letter is important, as all participants also identify as female. Celia finds this to be a critical part of her identity and to who she is as a teacher. She self-identifies as a feminist and uses her curriculum to read feminist authors and about "women's rights."

In one interaction with a male student who made a potentially sexist comment when he said "his girlfriend was all moody because she was on her period," Celia's reaction was to say "that's wrong," a better way to say this is "my girlfriend was just moody. Like that's it, just stop there." When students were asked to reflect on the course of the week students said "you're just too much of a feminist and you can't see past things." In a critical change to her curriculum and the student's feedback, Celia said,

> *if a kid says something that's racist. I kind of let it stir a little bit to allow for kids to be "that was wrong" instead of me being like "that's wrong. No!" And that takes a lot of self-reflection and pause on my part.*

This excerpt demonstrates how Celia's personal beliefs about gender is implicated in her curriculum and pedagogy. As a result of reflection, her pedagogy was challenged and changed through this experience. This experience also shows how with social interaction a "socio-cultural, historical, and institutional context" causes a negotiation of the multiple I-positions Celia holds and changes the teacher self (Zembylas, 2003, p. 213).

Celia further articulates the recursive way in which this negotiation happened when she reflects upon this interaction,

> *it's thinking about what is the intent with my correction? Is the intent to shut that kid down. Like, is it more valuable to shut him or her down and correct him versus helping that kid change their way of thinking or give them an idea that maybe questions their way of thinking?*

For Celia, reflection brings about a change in her professional self "I think in the world of education, if you do not reflect on your practice, you will never get better."

These participants believe their ethnic identity plays a critical role in their teaching. Frida said, "I think it is important to everything that I'm teaching my students." She describes,

> *I want them to understand who they are. And for me, I think discovering my identity, who I was. What does that mean? Taking into consideration my culture, my parents' history, helped me understand why I'm so, I guess, motivated to advocate for that specific population and to understand my purpose.*

Frida's ethnic identity is not just tied to her being a teacher, it is the very reason why she teaches and it shapes her philosophy of education. Her ethnic identity motivates her actions – advocating for students.

Sandra's identity as Latina shapes her curriculum. Because she did not see herself reflected in TV shows, movies, or in the academic "authority" texts she read while growing up, she does this for her students by incorporating marginalized voices in her curriculum. When taken together these examples demonstrate how these teacher's personal identity impacted their professional identity. Because these teachers also live outside of mainstream identities represented in education, it gives them unique insight into the needs of their students, which implicates their curriculum and pedagogy. A shared identity also provides an entry point for these teachers to build student-teacher relationships. Gloria and Frida demonstrate this with the use of the Spanish language. Gloria's ability to communicate with parents who do not speak English helps to build trust between herself and her students as well as herself and the family. Her identity which includes the language she speaks is a resource for students that aids in their academic success. Frida, an ESL teacher, also incorporates her identity into her position. Like Gloria, language is used to support students who struggle to access the mainstream curriculum.

For these teachers, personal identity is implicated in teaching practices, and having a shared identity is important for these teachers and the growth and learning of their students. Theorizing identity can lead to a practical understanding of the contextualized heart of a teacher in modern schooling. These teachers are active participants, or actors, who carry a specific identity at a particular moment in a specific context. The multiple subjectivities within the self are constituted and reconstituted as teachers engage in new circumstances, and as we see in these teachers the process of forming "one's professional identity is in essence about teachers

developing their own personal philosophy of education that grows out of who they are, what they believe, and where they have been over the course of their careers" (Mockler, 2011, p. 523).

These Latina participants bring unique values and perspectives into the classroom. They have been referred to by some as "cultural guardians" because they actively choose to work in schools with large numbers of Latino students (Griffin, 2018). Charter schools serve a staggering number of marginalized students. These participants serve in these schools with the intent to improve the lives of this population. The exploration of identity shifts the discourse away from what teachers should be and allows teachers to act as agents in their own practice and to personally and professionally develop. As teacher activists, these teachers are able to move beyond the given context to incorporate their own personal and professional understandings of education.

Christian

In chapter 1, I discuss my feelings as I went through the different stages of grief while critically thinking about the ways in which I contributed to the very inequalities I wanted to change. I saw this in my text message to Christian when I said "that's why I tried to push you so hard." What I meant was that I pushed the skills of rigor that I believed students would encounter in college. I, too, taught to the test, and later struggled as I began to delve into the critique of accountability. I saw myself as contributing to the struggles Christian faced in college.

After these text messages, Christian was put on probation within the school for nonacademic reasons. Although we have been in contact over the years, I do not believe he finished college. In our brief conversations, I have made efforts to discuss his progress in life but the conversations remain short. And like the teachers in this study, I know that the harder I push

to have that conversation with him, the further I will push Christian away. As I stated before, college was a life goal for Christian and he was an incredible student. If he was not able to persist and graduate, I can only imagine the disappointment and frustration he must still feel. His text messages were not simply included in this dissertation as a way to consider my role as a teacher.

What Christian expresses in his text messages is the real-life experience of a students' frustration and heartbreak within our educational system. His experience is the experience of a real individual. His success or lack thereof, in college, is complicated. In my texts, I point to race and ethnicity as a potential factor, but, for me, this research points to more complex issues at play that span across our nation' notions of the purpose of education, policies implemented into education as a result, the role of a teacher, identity, student agency, and so many more structures outside the scope of this research that implicate a students' success or ability to succeed within such a system.

This research allowed me to think differently about those text messages and about Christian, although I do not have personal resolution. As a teacher, my belief about the purpose of education has come to align deeply with Dewey and Makiguchi's philosophy of education. I came to understand them through my doctoral program and in reading and in dialogue with others. This dissertation is in no way a point of arrival. This research has taught me that teaching is a continuous process of learning and professional growth. It has also taught me that I may never have resolution in fully understanding the world of education, but theory has helped to make clear critical questions that may help to push forward a more equitable change.

Implications

The teachers in this study are underrepresented both in teaching and in educational literature. With federal policies such as Race to the Top (2009) and Every Student Succeeds (2015), the wave of neoliberal accountability in education persists. Demographic shifts in the United States suggest the Latino population, while already the largest minority population, will continue to increase. The neoliberal discourse in education does not consider the differing needs of communities that make such policies unfair, unequal, and unjust. Continued research is needed for these communities, not simply for the purposes of critical critique, although this too helps in bringing about needed changes, but to offer solutions that allow for these communities to thrive in their own right. The critiques of discipline within the network, which came about through teacher advocacy, initiatives for diversity, equity, and inclusion, and parent and student voice, helped to change policies that have broader implications for students. For example, research shows that students who do not promote do not improve academically, suffer from low self-esteem, lose interest in school, and are more likely to drop out (Greene & Winters, 2007). Such continued critique led to a change in disciplinary and promotion policies within the Midwest Charter Network.

Charter schools represent the neoliberal privatization of education. While publicly funded, these schools are accredited based on test scores and proof of adequate yearly progress, resulting in pressures placed on administrators, teachers, and students (Cucchiara, 2013; Hursh, 2005, Lipman, 2011; Means, 2013; Vinson, 2001). Because charter schools have historically served low-income Latino and African-American students, the perspectives of teachers in these schools provide critical qualitative insight into the ways standardization plays out in the classroom. While this research centers on teachers' experiences, teachers are only one part of the

learning dynamic. This research is not just about teachers however, it is inherently also about students. Further research should aim to capture the voices of students within these schools.

In the student-teacher relationship, teachers hold a position of power. Top-down policies mean teachers are asked to impose specific knowledge forms on students. When coupled with strict disciplinary policies, students become passive learners, potentially stunted in their ability to create value for themselves or to self-actualize. Stifling one's ability to reach their full potential is an unjust political act with life-long implications for the lives of students. Neoliberal conceptualization of teachers' roles is often characterized as simply deliverers of knowledge (Inukai, 2018), but do not consider how teaching is a deeply political act. Regardless of the curriculum one chooses or the pedagogical methods used, teachers are political actors. The teaching philosophy a teacher takes and how that plays out in the classroom, means we are making political choices and students are on the receiving end. Having students engage in critical thinking or rote memorization practices, means we are influencing the way students think and process information. These changes influence the way they see the world and themselves in it which has life-long implications for students.

When the classroom door closes, the dynamic of learning and growth involves the interpersonal relationship between student and teacher, one not acknowledged within neoliberal discourse, nor is the sacred, intimate, and personal nature of learning. The relationship between teacher and student is important in that process. The teachers in this study actively sought to build great relationships with students as an entry point for teaching and learning. Shared experiences and understanding of the world based on culture, race, ethnicity, gender, and other aspects of their personal and professional identity were used in the construction and cultivation of those relationships.

These teachers describe their understanding of the lived realities of their students which inspired empathy and permeates the curriculum and pedagogy. Teachers like Celia and Sandra understand the dynamic of relationship building and use the curriculum to introduce diverse authors and political figures who resemble and represent similar cultural backgrounds and experiences to that of the students in their classrooms, and introduce other marginalized groups to draw parallels to student experiences. As Dewey and Makiguchi believe, teaching and learning start with what the child knows, their interests, and their wants and needs. To some extent, this is a recognition of their identity and a deep understanding of who they are. Teachers are tasked with learning who their students are and using that to establish a democratic classroom in which students are able to create value.

Currently, the distribution of teachers in primary and secondary schools show that 80% of teachers are Caucasian, 9% Latino/Hispanic, 8% African American, and 2% are Asian (National Center for Statistics, 2018). When coupled with the statistic that Latino students are the largest minority group in primary and secondary education (Contreras, 2004; Gándara, 2010), this suggests a greater need for diversity in the teaching profession. The thoughts and experiences of these Latina teachers who serve in charter schools with primarily low-income Latino and African American students provide differing and often conflicting perspectives for and against accountability efforts. This suggests some agreement on the problems of accountability; however, it makes solutions for change more difficult. These accounts, however, offer insight into the complex nature of teaching and the multiple perspectives of the purpose of education. What these teachers offer is an approach that aligns with that of Dewey and Makiguchi, who offer us a new way to reimagine education, one that aligns with a path toward social justice.

Recommendations for Future Research

The first sentence in this dissertation, “education is seen as a gateway for opportunities, a pathway toward upward social mobility; a place where one acquires the skills, experiences, and knowledge needed to obtain good jobs and a prosperous future” (Gamoran, 2015; Monkman, Ronald, & Delimon Theramene, 2005), refers to a system deeply imbedded in our understanding of education’s purpose. Social mobility is seen as a way to improve social inequalities and education, as an institution, is central in attaining a more equitable society. While myth and truth lie in this reality, further theorizing might suggest this to be a flawed notion of education’s purpose and might help to reevaluate other institutions at play in maintaining societal inequalities. As this ideal aligns with monetary outcomes, it further reinforces an ideology based on neoliberal assumptions about education. Further research on our understanding of education, as a nation, may help to shed light on alternative – non-hegemonic – ideas of education.

An increased number of scholars and educators recognize the problems with neoliberal accountability measures. Research continues to abound on the negative implications accountability policies have within education. These policies implicate students' academic achievement, often in ways that privilege some groups while marginalizing others. A qualitative comparison in which students are able to freely articulate the ways in which accountability measures - both academically and disciplinarily affect them - would add to a growing critique of accountability. The teachers in this study expressed both positive and negative experiences surrounding accountability practices for them and for their students. However, the perspectives of students, particularly those under the greatest accountability pressures, might shed light on how such policies affect their perspectives about education. I suggest this because although

teachers in this study provide a glimpse into the student experience, we are not able to make assumptions regarding their perspectives.

Students who are on the receiving end of this top-down approach appear to be those most removed from the decisions made regarding teaching and learning. This, for me, presents ethical concerns. Agency, as a theoretical concept, arose within this study when thinking about the ways students are able to allow a teacher "in," while building a student-teacher relationship. Students might appear as docile recipients of a curriculum imposed on them from policy makers, administrators, and teachers, but they are capable of engaging or disengaging from the educational system imposed on them. Agency and other complex issues, such as identity or the student-teacher relationship, helps to humanize the realities of the educational experience and problematize neoliberal notions of education and should be further theorized.

While previous empirical and extant literature suggest a growing need for more Latino teachers in the classroom based on changing demographics, further research should include the ways in which neoliberal accountability policies act to prevent minority teachers, including Latino and African American teachers, from entering into the teaching profession. The insights of the teachers within this study suggest that the Latino perspective introduces a new voice and a new perspective that can create new developmental potentials for that community – and these should be further explored. These diverse perspectives raise critical questions or bring new curricular and pedagogical ideas into the school and open up possibilities for those in education to learn from and change.

Conclusion

This study is not the last word on accountability efforts. The implications of educational policies do not simply affect those within the schoolhouse. Broader societal issues are also

implicated which affect the lives of many. In this dissertation, I bring the philosophies of John Dewey and Tsunesaburo Makiguchi into conversation with the current state of education by using the experiences of six Latina teachers. These teachers illustrate the complexity of teaching and learning within the classroom, particularly one shaped by accountability measures. They share a common ethical commitment to improving the lives of students that aligns with the purpose of education shared by Dewey and Makiguchi, as well as the tensions that exist within that commitment. Their perspectives offer us a way to reimagine and think critically about curriculum and pedagogy, but also the real lives within the schoolhouse.

This research provides a compelling illustration of major issues in education, while also offering new perspectives for teacher renewal, possibilities, and empowerment at different levels of the personal and professional lives of teachers. The differing perspectives of these six teachers sheds light on the dialectical relationships of the teachers' experiences and the complexity of education as an institution. These teachers do not just see their role as presenting a curriculum, but as intellectual practitioners charged with and committed to improving the lives of students. While these teachers understand the expectations of accountability - constructed by the outside world of education - they practice agency and negotiate their own autonomy to provide a democratic and value-creating environment for their students. These teachers are not subordinate to one single understanding of education presented within accountability, but in varying ways resist these notions and actively work against them.

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Appendix A

Interview Protocol

Background Questions

- How long have you been teaching?
- What subject area do you teach?
- Why did you choose teaching as a profession?

Research Question 1: ***When thinking about education under the effects of neoliberal politics, how do Latina teachers who work in a charter school conceive the purpose of education?***

- What is your philosophy of education?
- How did you arrive at that philosophy of education?
- What do you believe is the purpose of education?
- What would you like your students to learn/know when they leave your classroom?
- Pedagogically, what practices do you use that align with what you want your students to learn?
- Are there ways in which your philosophy of education conflicts with what you do in your classroom? Or with the culture of the school?
- Do you believe your philosophy of education and pedagogical practices allow your students an equitable education when compared to those who are not in the same kind of school – for example a private school?

Research Question 2: ***How do these teachers describe their experiences teaching in a charter school in the context of neoliberal accountability politics?***

- How would you describe the kind of school you teach at?
- How would you describe the culture of your school?
- How would you describe the racial/ethnic makeup of your school?
- How would you describe the current educational climate?
- Does the current educational climate as you described it reflect your understanding of the purpose of education? If so, in what ways? If not, why not?
- Are their things you wish you could do in the classroom that you aren't able to do?
- Is there a reason why you can't do what you would like to do?
- What does a charter school offer you in your teaching?
- What does a charter school not offer you in your teaching?

Research Question 3: ***How is their identity implicated in the teaching process?***

- How do you ethnically identify?
- How would you describe your own race or ethnicity?
- Are there labels such as Hispanic or Latina that you prefer?
- Do you believe your race / ethnicity impacts or influences your teaching in any way?
- Are there ways in which your ethnic and racial identity conflict with what you do in your classroom? Or what is expected of you as a teacher?

Research Question 4: ***Do these teachers subscribe to educational philosophies resonant with those of Dewey and Makiguchi?***

- Are there any thinkers/philosophers that helped you to develop your philosophy of education?

Closing Questions

- Is there anything else you would like to share about your teaching experience that I have not yet asked?
- Do you have any questions for me regarding the research or anything else?