CONVENING SOCIAL JUSTICE LEARNING COMMUNITIES TO ENCOURAGE PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS TO BUILD ANTI-OPPRESSIVE PEDAGOGIES AND PRACTICES

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A Thesis
Submitted in Partial Fulfilment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts
in Sustainable Communities

Northern Arizona University
May 2014

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ABSTRACT

CONVENING SOCIAL JUSTICE LEARNING COMMUNITIES TO ENCOURAGE PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS TO BUILD ANTI-OPPRESSIVE PEDAGOGIES AND PRACTICES

JACLYN PACE

Social justice education which embraces critical, queer, and feminist pedagogies and promotes democracy, equity, and inclusion is often absent in the education of future teachers. The extent to which social justice issues are part of the curricula of many teacher preparation programs functions simply to fulfill minimal diversity/multicultural requirements mandated by the state or institution in which they operate. I argue that in-depth social justice education—one which explores the intersectionality of identity, power, privilege, and oppression—is vital for all pre-service teachers, regardless of what and where they intend to teach.

Through use of qualitative critical, queer, and feminist methodology, this study explored the experiences of twelve pre-service teachers enrolled in Practicum (pseudonym), a dual-major special education and elementary education teacher preparation program at Southwestern State University (pseudonym), who became members of a social justice learning community. Over the six weeks that the learning community convened, the members participated in a variety of discussions and activities designed to build awareness about issues of social justice in schools and society in order to foster their creation of anti-oppressive pedagogies and practices. To lay the foundation for social justice education, the participants investigated the intersectionality of
their own and others’ identities as well as how hegemony operates to privilege some and oppress others on both the microscopic and macroscopic levels.

It was found that the members of the learning community experienced the social justice curricula through the lenses of binarism, individualism, and proceduralism, which posed barriers to their creation of anti-oppressive pedagogies and practices. Binarism limited the participants’ creation of their teacher identities by offering them constricted views of what they as teachers and women could and should be. It also caused them to view their students in the dichotomous roles of male and female, effectively limiting their accepted gender role expressions. Individualism led to the participants’ othering those whom are members of groups they themselves were not a part, namely oppressed groups, their supervisors, and their students. This ultimately led to a failure on the participants’ part to identify with people who are different from them and build relationships across boundaries, something teachers must be adept at in order to meet the needs of their students and the communities in which they work. Finally, proceduralism was found in the participants’ predilection for concrete methods—the how—of implementing social justice education rather than the building of pedagogies predicated on theories of oppression, power, and privilege—the why. This effectively separated theory and practice, which need to be melded in order to truly embrace anti-oppressive education.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project would not have been possible without the support of my partner, H, who comforted and praised me through countless sleepless nights and the succeeding days of rollercoaster emotionality. As a first generation college student, this was an incredibly daunting undertaking—just how personally enveloping it would prove to be, I had no idea. H, your love and support provided me with the fuel to keep going, for which I am unendingly grateful.

I would like to thank my thesis chair, Dr. Jean Ann Foley, who foraged through my unkempt first drafts for the salvageable pieces that would grow to become this thesis. Her research interests in critical pedagogy and social justice in teacher preparation directly align with my own. It was through working with Dr. Foley this past summer on a research project which involved teaching for social justice and democratic values within the Practicum Program that my own research project came into being. Her commitment to collaboration is a model for the university, which often thrives on competition and individualism. Dr. Foley, I thank you from the bottom of my heart for cultivating an academic in me and being so supportive in the process.

I would also like to express my gratitude to Dr. Frances Riemer and Dr. Joe Wegwert, who served as members of my committee. Dr. Riemer taught me a great deal about feminist ethnographic research in education, which provides a framework for the methodology of this project. Dr. Wegwert introduced me to queer pedagogy, which not only informs this research project, but my own pedagogy as well. I thank you both for being inspirational educators and for your support in this project.

Finally, I would like to thank the Practicum Program at Southwestern State University for welcoming me into their community and allowing me the freedom to pursue my passion for
social justice education over the past year through my position as graduate assistant. To the
twelve young women who participated in this study, I am exceedingly appreciative. Without
your willingness to delve into the uncharted waters of building anti-oppressive pedagogies and
teaching practices—and to be taped in the process!—this project would not have been feasible. I
wish you all the best on your lifelong journey through teaching and learning.
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DEDICATION

For all those who have dedicated their lives to fighting for social justice, against all odds, refusing to give in no matter how bleak the outlook. For all those who have committed their careers to educating past, current, and future generations against oppression and towards just social change.
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

“Live as if you were to die tomorrow. Learn as if you were to live forever.”

-Mahatma Gandhi

In order for a community—whether it be a learning community, a school community, or a community of people who either intentionally or unintentionally dwell in the same physical locale—to be worth sustaining, critical theorists believe it must be founded on justice. Currently, the majority of our communities function on the neo-liberal ideals of capitalism, individualism, and competition, requiring the oppression of othered people or groups in order for the privileged few to preserve business as usual. The capitalist regime has learned to sustain itself through hegemony by indoctrinating its citizens into the way of life necessary for it to remain in place, beginning with our youth within the walls of our public schools. In order to create the types of communities worth sustaining, the functions of schooling needs to shift to interdependence, justice, democracy, and agency. This thesis and the correlating research project aim to build agency and awareness of social justice issues in schools and society in order to inspire pre-service teachers to embrace anti-oppressive pedagogies and practices.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this research project was to document and examine the experiences of the pre-service teachers who convened to form a learning community in which they explored the intersectionality of power, privilege, and oppression in order to promote social justice in K-12 school and classroom settings. For the purposes of this project, a learning community was defined as a group of students who voluntarily assembled outside of regularly-scheduled class time to discuss matters of mutual interest—in this case social justice through the lens of
intersectionality. The learning community, entitled *Making Social Justice Part of Your Praxis*, which convened for the purposes of this project, was comprised of twelve pre-service teachers who were enrolled in the Practicum Program (pseudonym), a dual-major Elementary and Special Education teacher preparation program at Southwestern State University (pseudonym). My goal throughout the duration of the six-week-long project was to capture the experiences of the members of the learning community, focusing specifically on how their individual and collective experiences affected them both personally and professionally, especially in terms of the development of their own personal pedagogies. I was interested in using the learning community as a means to build agency and awareness towards uniting theory and practice for social justice pedagogy. My argument for undertaking this project centered on the belief that pre-service teachers’ understanding of their own and others’ identities and the specific ways in which power, privilege, and oppression intersect are key to their informed development of anti-oppressive pedagogies and practices.

**Problem Statement**

In her seminal work, *Practice Makes Practice: A Critical Study of Learning to Teach*, Britzman (2003) argues that student teachers draw largely on their subjective experiences of schooling and “commonsensical” views of teachers and their work in creating their own teacher identities, noting that these views are often rife with sexist stereotypes which equate the images of the “good,” kind, and self-sacrificing woman with the “good,” kind, self-sacrificing teacher. She contends,

These images displace the collective concerns of real teachers with measures of individual behavior based upon adherence to patriarchal conventions, notions of unitary non-contradictory identity, and images of professionalism that preclude the struggles of
gender, class, race, and generation. In either case, the multiple identities of the teacher—both given and possible—become lost in a cycle of cultural determinism. (Britzman, 2003, p. 6)

This demonstrates a problem within teacher preparation, for it highlights the fact that students in programs designed to “prepare” teachers are not only denied exploration of their own intersectionality, but further are not offered visions of transformational pedagogies or identities that embrace social justice and anti-oppressive education. Pre-service teachers will simply continue to reproduce these traditional, “commonsensical” visions of “good” teachers without being offered space and guidance in questioning the dominant discourse and how it influences teaching and learning.

In his research of teacher preparation programs devoted to social justice in the U.S., Kumashiro (2009) identifies three images of “good teachers”: teachers as learned practitioners, teachers as researchers, and teachers as professionals, stating,

Common and commonsensical notions of “real” or “good” teaching do not involve challenging oppression and can actually help to perpetuate rather than change the oppressive status quo of schools and society… Traditionally, teacher education programs have contributed to this problem by not significantly troubling the ways that dominating views and practices of “good” teachers contribute to oppression and hinder anti-oppressive change. (p. 1)

These theorists tell us that when pre-service teachers are not offered opportunities to “trouble” the teacher identities they are presented with and the ways in which these identities function to reiterate the oppression rampant in our schools, they are left to make uninformed decisions about
their own identities as teachers, further widening the gap in knowledge between theory and practice.

Through his work with K-12 schoolteachers, Lortie (1975) outlined three tenets of the teaching professional ethos that function to keep the educational system static and maintain the teacher identities mentioned above: presentism, (focusing on the short term), conservatism (concentrating on small-scale rather than whole-school changes), and individualism (performing teaching in isolation from other teachers). Lortie (1975) believed that in order to catalyze a change in our educational system teachers must change their practices, to which end he offers teacher collaboration and collegiality through the creation of professional learning communities. In this way, teachers are able to break free of the “commonsensical” views of “good” teachers and teaching that Britzman (2003) and Kumashiro (2009) highlight, through cooperative and collaborative learning within a community of like-minded individuals.

Considering that collaboration is the principal tenet of the learning community (Alejano-Steele, et al., 2011; Dinsmore & Wenger, 2006; Hord, 1997) and my own necessity to catalyze change in the field of education (Lortie, 1975), I decided to create a learning community with students who are currently studying to become professionals in the field of education. My further reasoning for deciding to undertake this project is threefold and follows below.

First, I encountered resistance to integrating social justice pedagogy within the framework of the Practicum Program, for which I was a graduate assistant during the time of the study. While my supervisors had been supportive of my endeavors and given me space to consistently incorporate social justice education, it was often in stand-alone activities which functioned to situate social justice as an add-on to the main goals and curriculum of the program.
rather than integrating it into the existing framework. The Practicum Program relied on a neutral, proceduralist approach to teaching, which was exemplified in the work required from the students for their practicum placements. This work included weekly reflections on their experiences in their practicum placements, monthly reflections on the seminars, four written lesson plans, and a host of paperwork indicating the hours worked and evaluating their experiences and work in their practicum classrooms, none of which included components of social justice or criticality. Proceduralism—which functions as a barrier to social justice education—was also a major finding of this study, which I expound upon in Chapters 4 and 5.

Second, as a graduate assistant in the Practicum Program, I found myself situated in a unique and sometimes troubling space. While my position afforded me insider access to the mechanisms of the program as well as opportunities, marginal as they may be, to incorporate social justice into its assignments and activities, I was also faced with the difficulty of promoting an agenda that is not necessarily embraced by my colleagues. The ideals that inform my research are concerned with disrupting the norm, which counter the conservative, uncritical ideals of the College of Education at this traditional university. While they make claim to promoting diversity and critical thinking, the null curriculum suggests otherwise. This presented a number of potential issues by jeopardizing the positive working relationships I had formed through the misalignment of my duties as a graduate assistant and my ideals as an advocate of social justice.

Third, the goal of creating a destabilized space within a learning community can be facilitated by convening a small group of students outside of the university classroom setting where there is more possibility for creating a horizontal power structure between members of the community. According to Alejano-Steele, Hamington, MacDonald, Potter, Schafer, Sgoutas, & Tull (2011), “A learning community destabilizes the classroom in ways that can powerfully
engage participants, much in the way that intersectionality destabilizes identity stereotypes” (p. 93); to which I would add, the formation of learning communities in teacher preparation functions to destabilize, or queer, the normative roles of student and teacher by effectively merging them.

Harste, Leland, Schmidt, Vasquez, and Ociepka (2004) found that a new teacher’s understanding of the interconnectedness of theory and practice not only influences the way they position themselves as professionals, but also informs the stance they take in creating curriculum, and whether they can see themselves as “change agent[s] who can make a difference in the lives of children” (p. 1). Connecting theory to practice is a vital step in breaking down the compartmentalized approach many teacher preparation programs, like Practicum, take to educating teachers through setting their more theoretical university-based experiences as students apart from their practical classroom-based experiences as pre-service teachers. Britzman (2009) offers,

> Enacted in every pedagogy are the tensions between knowing and being, thought and action, theory and practice, knowledge and experience, the technical and the existential, the objective and the subjective. Traditionally expressed as dichotomies, these relationships are not nearly so neat or binary. Rather, such relationships are better expressed as dialogic in that they are shaped as they shape each other in the process of coming to know. (p. 2)

Dichotomizing the notions central to education, such as knowing/being and theory/practice, hinders the experiences of the learner who may be unable to make the connections necessary to inform their pedagogy. My goal was to create space within the learning community for dialogue
around these tensions, for breaking down, or queering, these dichotomies through use of dialogue is central to embracing social justice and anti-oppressive pedagogy (Adams, Bell, & Griffin, 1997).

Rather than attempting to address the issues of lack of criticality and absence of inquiry into anti-oppressive socially-just pedagogies on a programmatic level within Practicum, I decided to form a learning community of twelve students from the current cohort in order to attempt to encourage the pedagogies and practices of these pre-service teachers towards social justice. While I was asked to create a similar learning community for the Practicum supervisors separate from the learning community to be convened with students, this second project did not come to fruition. However, I am currently in the process of transferring the work done in the student learning community to the entire Practicum cohort, which currently consists of twenty-nine students and four supervisors.

**Significance of Study**

Both social justice education and learning communities are committed to addressing some of the major issues public education faces today. With an ever-diversifying population, teachers must be equipped with the tools and understanding to meet the individual and collective needs of their students—especially since the majority of teachers themselves continue to be white, middle-class women with little to no personal experience of social injustice (Nieto, 1992). Teacher preparation programs often fail to provide future teachers with the theories or methods to build socially just, anti-oppressive pedagogies and practices (Kumashiro, 2004). However, I argue that by convening learning communities devoted to exploring issues of social justice in education, we can do more than simply fill diversity requirements.
Learning communities date back to the colonial colleges of the early 17th century and began their resurgence in institutions of higher learning in the 1980s, led primarily by the Washington Center at Evergreen State College (Lenning & Ebbers, 1999). Patrick Hill (1985), then Academic Vice President at Evergreen, stated in a speech entitled “The Rationale for Learning Communities,”

The learning community movement, such as it is, is not a response to one problem in higher education: it is a response to a whole complex of issues and the fundamental issues identified by the national reports. It's really a vehicle of response for all of those problems. It is not isolating one problem, nor is it a reform effort…It is a vehicle for responding to a whole cluster of fundamental ills besetting higher education today. (p.1)

He goes on to name seven issues that the implementation of learning communities in higher education intends to address: (1) the incompatible expectations of students and faculty, (2) the lack of “intellectual interaction” between students and faculty as well as students and their peers, (3) inadequacy of coherence between courses, (4) the limited resources and opportunities for professional development for faculty, (5) the compartmentalization of disciplines in colleges and universities, (6) rising college drop-out rates, and (7) budget cuts which feed into the previous six issues (Hill, 1985).

While social justice and learning communities are not new to the realm of education, they are rarely combined, especially in the field of teacher preparation. This creates a gap in the literature which my project intends to fill. In the following chapters I explore the literature on learning communities and social justice education, outline the methodology with which I created
my project, report the findings of the study, and offer conclusions and recommendations for the use of social justice learning communities in teacher preparation programs.

Reflexive Statement

I am passionate about this project and the problems it attempts to uncover and address because of my own experiences in education from multiple perspectives—as a student, a teacher, and now a supervisor/educator-of-sorts for pre-service teachers. I became a teacher because of my own disillusion with the public education system, in which I felt consistently excluded as a female from a working class, undereducated family. Education was not something my family or I personally valued, but pursuing a college degree was the only escape I saw from the small town (and small-town-mindedness) in which I came of age. When my university experience began to mirror my high school experience through its focus on individualism, enforcement of bureaucratic requirements, and lack of critical or non-dominant perspectives, I dropped out. A year later, after working an office job in which I was paid minimum wage to perform mindless, menial tasks, I once again looked to education as a path to freedom. This time, I pursued a private liberal arts college. Though the cost of attendance was an immediate deterrent, their scholarship program offered hope.

I ultimately graduated from a progressive, nontraditional Education Studies program at Eugene Lang College, the New School University. Here, I was educated in the theories of Dewey, Freire, Horton, and hooks—not simply the methods and procedures that teacher preparation programs tend to focus on. It was through this exploration of educational theory that I gained the criticality necessary to examine and ultimately attempt to address in my classrooms the systems of power and oppression that govern our society. Growing up poor, I was aware of class differences, but being a white woman who had the opportunity to take advantage of her
position in the dominant culture, I had to be guided through questioning what I had always taken for granted—my white privilege. As a queer woman who has felt the oppressive force of heteronormativity all of my life and struggled with identity because of it, I have firsthand experience with the importance of confronting the ways in which our schools prescribe heteronormative roles.

It is through my own experience that I have come to realize that teachers and schools have perhaps the most important role in shaping the precious minds of our youth and must do so intentionally. To this end, teachers must be made aware of what they, their schools, and the curriculum they use teaches and excludes, both explicitly and hidden. My personal and professional life experiences have informed my commitment to social justice and prepared me to undertake this thesis project. While being a first-generation college student has made this process difficult, I was eager to embark on this experiential journey of researching and writing a thesis with the aim of not only impacting the pedagogies of the future educators I worked with, but my own as well.

Creating, implementing, and ultimately participating in an action-based research project was immensely rewarding for me. Returning to the university after a ten year hiatus in which I was immersed in the role of educator made transitioning back into student-mode extremely difficult. I struggled with the practicality and application of the new knowledge I was gaining, often regretting my choice to theorize and prosthelytize rather than simply go out and do the work that needs to be done to make the world a more just place. This project allowed me to do both, and I believe the Sustainable Communities program’s emphasis on an applied component in a master’s thesis was the only way I was able to endure.
I would like to express my gratitude to the twelve members of the learning community as well as the coordinators and supervisors of the Practicum Program at Southwestern State University who made this research possible. I in no way intend to shed a negative light on the participants of this study or the program of which they are a part; I simply intend to share the results and my analyses of the data I collected in hopes of shedding light on some of the barriers to social justice education that pre-service teachers in traditional teacher preparation programs face. While the findings may focus on the negative aspects that arose from teaching for diversity and social justice, the participants and I agreed that the experience of being a part of the learning community was a positive and beneficial one. As a critical theorist, I have had the difficult job of over these past few months of rectifying my feelings of guilt over having to report the barriers to social justice that arose from my study with the feelings of connectedness and excitement it brought the participants and myself to be involved in a project that helped us to build community which strives for anti-oppressive social change in an otherwise individualistic, restricting space.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

“Without community, there is no liberation.”

-Audre Lorde

The purpose of this chapter is to review the literature on both learning communities and social justice education. I begin with an exploration of the literature on professional and educational learning communities, focusing on their implementation in higher education with students, as this literature is most relevant to the study. Next, I review the literature on social justice education at post-secondary level, building on a theory of oppression and exploring power and privilege to provide a framework for social justice. Finally, I conclude by merging the fields of learning communities and social justice education in teacher preparation, filling a gap that previously existed in the literature.

Learning Communities

To get an idea of the prevalence of educational research on learning communities, I began by searching the term in the Educational Resource Information Center (ERIC) database, one of the most comprehensive and accessible databases in the field. The term “learning community” returned only 6,027 results out of the over 1.3 billion articles in its system. One-third (1,304) of these articles were published in the past five years and only a tenth of those (81) were published in 2013. While the majority of articles (1,130) on learning communities were linked to the descriptor “Higher Education,” these articles only made up one-sixth of the total articles on the topic in the database. An advanced search which included the term “learning community” along with either “pre-service teacher,” “teacher education,” or “teacher preparation” returned a maximum of 780 results. An advanced search of the terms “learning community” and “social
While literature on learning communities in the fields of education and professional development does exist, it is by no means plentiful. Further, there exists a gap in the literature on the use of learning communities in teacher preparation—especially in regards to social justice—which my project intends to fill. In this section, I will review the literature on the use of learning communities in educational and professional settings, outlining the various types and their benefits. Ultimately, I found that while a main purpose of convening learning communities is to build community, they tend to be used in depoliticized contexts, such as to increase retention rates and improve grades rather than to raise awareness and organize students around important issues, such as social justice.

**Professional Learning Communities**

An interesting area of the literature on learning communities focuses on the use of professional learning communities towards the effectiveness of schools and the school improvement process (Hord, 1997). Astuto, Clark, Read, McGree, & Fernandez (1993) outline three school communities: the professional community of educators, learning communities of teachers and students and among students, and the stakeholder community. A “professional community of learners” is built within a school by including teachers and administrators in a collaborative to “continuously seek and share learning, and act on their learning” (Hord, 1997, p.1), for as Hord notes, individuals change, not organizations (1997).

Hord (1997) describes the attributes of professional learning communities as: supportive and shared leadership, collective creativity, shared values and vision, supportive conditions, and shared personal practice. She notes, “Such factors, indicators, or variables that are supportive of
growth, development, and self-esteem of students are exactly those that are critical to gaining the same outcomes for a school’s staff” (Hord, 1997, p.19). Unfortunately, schools do not always practice what they preach and often prescribe one remedy to address issues within their faculty and another to address the same issues in their student body.

**Educational Learning Communities**

The term “learning community” is an umbrella term which centers on creating community in order to increase learning. Lenning & Ebbers (1999) offer,

By 'learning community' we mean an intentionally developed community that will promote and maximize learning. For learning communities to be effective, they must emphasize active, focused involvement in learning and collaboration that stimulates and promotes the group's and group members' learning. (p.8)

Functioning with community as the central concept, the authors note, “True community involves inclusiveness, commitment, consensus that allows differences to be acknowledged and processed, contemplation, vulnerability, and “graceful fighting,” where conflict is not avoided, minimized, or disregarded” (Lenning & Ebbers, 1999, p. 5).

Dewey (1897) and Meiklejohn (1932) are considered the forerunners of learning communities, the philosophy of which are based on the Dewyan principles of community, democracy, and social processing (Lenning & Ebbers, 1999; Nieto, 1996). The focus in higher education today remains on teaching rather than learning, which has multiple adverse effects on the quality and amount of student learning that takes place in a traditional classroom. Student learning communities attempt to combat this critical gap by creating a space which is truly student-centered. Unfortunately,

Students today are so busy with outside jobs, family care, and other activities that it is
difficult for learning communities—which are necessary for the best learning—to form spontaneously...students often experience learning in an isolated, fragmented manner that also prevents needed learning communities from forming without outside assistance.

(Lenning & Ebbers, 1999, p. 2)

The isolation of students’ learning due to the demands of their personal lives coupled with the teacher-centeredness of college classrooms leaves students with many barriers to connecting deeply with their education or their classmates. This is why it is suggested that colleges and universities promote the inclusion of learning communities in their institutions.

The term “learning community” dates back to the colonial colleges of the U.S., which were committed to building communities of scholars who shared common values (Lenning & Ebbers, 1999). They have their roots in Boyer's (1987) principles, which define six types of educational communities: (1) **purposeful community**, where faculty and students collaborate to strengthen their institution’s academic goals; (2) **open community**, where members are committed to freedom of expression and civility; (3) **just community**, where diversity and personal difference are explored and pursued; (4) **disciplined community**, where members work towards the common by following specific procedures; (5) **caring community**, where each member’s well-being is supported and the groups works together in service of others; and (6) **celebrative community**, where the heritage and tradition of the group or institution are celebrated.

While not all learning communities specifically prescribe to Boyer’s (1987) principles of communities found in educational settings, a learning community’s goals and purpose often aligns with one or more of the above principles. Ultimately, learning communities are committed to “breaking down the idea of learning alone, being alone, teaching alone” (Gabelnick, 1997, p. 32). However, many learning communities are convened mainly for the purposes of increasing
grades and retention. In order to be truly transgressive, learning communities must be committed specifically to increasing criticality and promoting social justice.

**Learning communities at the elementary and secondary levels.** Many elementary and secondary schools utilize the learning-community classroom approach, which aims to prepare students to be democratic citizens (Cushner, McClelland, & Safford, 1996). This is a lofty yet necessary goal which aims at dismantling the individualism that traditional styles of education promote. Individualism, the belief that individual worth and well-being is more important than the collective worth or well-being of a group or community, is a core concept of neoliberalism (Steger & Roy, 2010), and poses a distinct threat to democracy. Individualism, which promotes self-reliance, is central to maintaining a capitalist regime which benefits those in power by increasing the demand for individual goods and services which are supplied by monopolizing forces. Individualism is instilled in us through our educational system which promotes competition over collaboration. Oakes & Lipton (2003) maintain that an education system which still functions on preparing a workforce thrives on competition,

> Competition for grades is encouraged, and work is normally done individually. “Keep your eyes on your own paper,” and “Don’t talk to your neighbors,” are common statements made by teachers to reinforce ideals of individualism and competition. It is expected, and therefore accepted, that some students, being poorer raw material, will fail. (p. 12)

These methods, dated in the industrial era, not only promote individualism, but also the concept of meritocracy, a myth that suggests that hard work and perseverance can overcome any obstacle, which does not take into account the pervasive inequalities inherent in our social
system that prevent this myth from being realized (Oakes & Lipton, 2003; Adams, Bell, & Griffin, 1997).

Schools which thrive on learning-community classrooms realize that the best way to learn democracy, is to practice democracy. Dewey (1916), one of the most influential advocates of democracy in education, claims “The democracy which proclaims equality of opportunity as its ideal requires an education in which learning the social application, ideas and practice, work and recognition of the meaning of what is done, are united from the beginning and for all” (p. 223). The goal of citizenship through teaching democracy, however, is often trumped by the goal of creating a workforce in public education (Cushner, McClelland, & Safford, 1996).

According to Cushner, McClelland, & Safford (1996), educating for democracy requires active participation in pursuit of a school and classroom community, not only on the part of students and teachers, but parents, community members, and school administration as well. They illuminate three basic characteristics of learning communities, the first being that they include schools and classrooms that are set up for activity—as Wood (1992) puts it, “They are places to do things in, not places to sit and watch (p. xii-xiv). Second, they thrive on active participation from parents, teachers, principals, and students who often work collaboratively on school- and community-wide projects. Third, each individual is valued and has a sense of belonging to the community.

Learning communities at the elementary and secondary levels revisit old pedagogies, like that of Plato’s dialectic from the third and fourth centuries, Abelard’s discovery learning from the twelfth century, and Comenius’ seventeenth century implementation of what would now be called critical and feminist pedagogy in addition to inquiry and collaborative learning (Cushner, McClelland, & Safford, 1996). While these philosophies and practices of education are not new,
What is relatively new in learning-community classrooms is not that such varied instruction should exist, but that they should exist more or less simultaneously and be exercised by both children and adults. (Cushner, McClelland, & Safford, 1996, p. 109) In public education, teachers do not often stray from traditional methodologies, nor do they offer children the opportunities to benefit from the same instructional practices that have been proven effective with adults.

The roles of both teacher and learner are expanded in learning-community classrooms (Cushner, McClelland, & Safford, 1996). Teachers, who can be parents, administrators, and/or members of the community as well as certified educators, discard the role of authoritarian or sole bearer of knowledge in favor of that of mentor, coach, or facilitator. This often places the teacher in the role of learner as specialists from the community educate the class on their knowledge of their specific skill set. Students are also given the opportunity to try on the teacher role and can often be found teaching their classmates. Ultimately, everyone in a learning-community classroom—whether child or adult—performs both the role of teacher and that of the learner.

Finally, content knowledge is gained through service learning in learning-community classrooms where “the project or activity often comes first, and the acquisition of knowledge and skills needed to accomplish the activity become necessary tools in the service of that activity” (Cushner, McClelland, & Safford, 1996, p. 110). This decenters the common notion that standards or subject matter knowledge should be the focus of classroom learning, making education more contextual and practical for everyday use.

**Learning communities in higher education.** Learning communities in higher education are often defined in terms of connected coursework, predicated by synchronizing the courses which a cohort of students with common interests enrolls in (Dinsmore & Wegner, 2006). In this
section I will explore the various types of learning communities that have been utilized in higher education, followed by an outlining of the benefits of participating in such learning communities. An invaluable resource for this section has been the ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report publication “The Powerful Potential of Learning Communities: Improving Education for the Future” (Lenning & Ebbers, 1999), which made no mention of the use of learning communities in teacher preparation and very little towards the goal of social justice. In fact, I only found one article which linked learning communities to teacher preparation.

According to Alejano-Steele, et. al (2011), “Truly robust learning communities…entail not only a radical departure from traditional forms of education, but also a change in spirit and philosophy” (p. 93). This radical shift starts with de-centering the classroom and creating space for student voices in order to encourage students to make connections between theory and lived experience. Specifically related to the topic of intersectionality, the authors contend that de-centering the classroom through collaborative learning communities helps to fashion a space in which investigating identity can occur without fear or reluctance (Alejano-Steele, et al., 2011).

**Dimensions of learning communities.** Two important dimensions of learning communities in higher education have been identified: *primary membership* and *primary form of interaction* (Lenning & Ebbers, 1999). Primary membership identifies common characteristics of group members and differentiates them into learning organizations, which consist of members of a company or non-profit organization; faculty learning communities, which consist of strictly faculty; and student learning communities, which consist primarily of students, but may also include a faculty advisory. Primary form of interaction differentiates between group members' main method of interaction and includes in-person physical interaction, such as in class or another physical location on or off campus; visual interaction, via satellite, Skype, or another
online mode of communication which includes a visual component; and non-direct interaction through correspondence, which includes mail, email, and web-based interaction.

In order to create and implement effective learning communities, Carter (1995) offers four characteristics of successful groups that learning communities should embrace: (1) clear goals and purposes which are understood by all members, (2) honest, open, and direct communication between all members, (3) shared and collective leadership, and (4) respect for minority members’ voices and views. For faculty, this may pose a challenge, as it requires a shift from teacher-centered instruction to a learner-centered environment, which is not the norm in higher education.

**Types of learning communities.** At the college and university level, there are four main types of learning communities: *curricular learning communities, classroom learning communities, residential learning communities,* and *student-type learning communities* (Lenning & Ebbers, 1999). Curricular learning communities convene outside of class with the goal of focusing on specific curriculum, be it early childhood education or geography information systems. Classroom learning communities are generally put in place by a professor whose main focus is to create a community of learners within his or her classroom. Residential learning communities usually refer to communities created in on-campus housing, which often focus on the general well-being of the residents but may take on larger goals such as reducing the carbon footprint campus-wide. While they may convene themselves spontaneously, student-type learning communities are normally offered through the university to help minority students, such as first generation college students, create a network of support.

**Principles of effective student learning communities.** Six principles have been outlined for implementing effective student learning communities: (1) They should be “small, unique, and
cohesive units” in which members share common goals and influence one another in powerful ways; (2) Students should interact using “the four I’s” of involvement, investment, influence, and identity; (3) Learning communities should have “bounded territory” which is controlled by the group, accessible to all its members, and supports stable interaction; (4) They are student-centered spaces and any staff involved should treat the student members as peers who are responsible for their own learning; (5) Learning communities should promote collaboration between faculty, students, and staff—they “should not be created in a vacuum”; and (6) Learning communities need clear expectations and to promote active participation (Lenning & Ebbers, 1999, pp. 85-86). The researchers believe that adhering to these six principles will result in effective learning communities which are not only beneficial to those involved, but have the ability to transform the educational institutions of which they are a part.

**Benefits of learning communities.** Learning communities have been found to have a plethora of benefits for students and faculty alike. Many of these benefits can be attributed to the collaborative and cooperative nature of learning communities. The results of nearly 400 studies over the past century have found the following to be true of students who experience collaborative and cooperative approaches to learning, like that which learning communities take:

- academic achievement, a higher retention rate, increased critical thinking, higher-level thinking skills and strategies, motivation to achieve, self-esteem and confidence, trust in others, low levels of anxiety and stress, creativity, frequent new ideas, the ability to generalize to new situations, problem-solving ability, a commitment to learning, instructional satisfaction, positive attitudes toward the major or discipline, positive attitudes toward the institution, positive attitudes toward other students, a commitment to and caring for other students, positive perceptions of the instructor, less absenteeism and
tardiness, feelings of responsibility for completing assignments, a willingness to take on
difficult tasks, better listening skills, respect for others’ perceptions and attitudes, a
commitment to peers’ growth, social skills, and social support. (Lenning & Ebbers, 1999,
p. 58)

Other studies have shown that collaborative and cooperative learning communities increase the
acceptance of diverse racial, ethnic, and cultural differences between students; Tinto (1998)
states, “Collaborative experiences provide lessons that no lecture or homilies can provide.
Asking students to share the responsibility for each other’s learning teaches students their
learning and that of their peers are inextricably intertwined and that, regardless of race, class,
gender, or background, their academic interests are the same” (p. 173). It would seem that
learning communities dedicated to diversity and social justice might help institutions to improve
relationships between students of different races, ethnicities, and cultures. Unfortunately, there is
not a great deal of literature on this topic.

Benefits Specific to Students. The 1980s marked the first assessment of undergraduate
student learning groups by the U.S. Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education who
found that learning groups were the crucial variable in successful learning across the plethora of
projects they assessed (Lenning & Ebbers, 1999). Students from all walks of life, whether at
private colleges, community colleges, or public universities benefit from participating in learning
communities, no matter their educational background or major. Bouton & Garth (1983) point out,

To start with, learning groups work—that is, they enhance learning—irrespective of the
type of institution, type of student, level of education, or subject matter. Indeed, learning
groups promote the broad liberal education goals that are often more honored by
educational rhetoric than pursued in classroom practice—specific information and
content, general disciplinary concepts, generic cognitive abilities, interpersonal skills, knowledge about higher education communities, and understanding of how to learn.

Learning groups seem to increase both the efficiency and effectiveness of learning. (p. 4)

Not only have learning communities been proven effective, but they aim to fill the educational and developmental gaps that normal classrooms create through restricting students from such opportunities as interacting with and discussing muddy content and concepts.

The benefits to students who participate in learning communities seem to be virtually endless. I have organized the various findings according to those specific to students’ academic and personal/social lives in the following table for demonstrative purposes, though many of the benefits overlap:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic Benefits</th>
<th>Personal/Social Benefits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• higher academic achievement</td>
<td>• maturity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• greater educational aspirations</td>
<td>• self-understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• retention</td>
<td>• satisfaction with the institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• higher GPA</td>
<td>• involvement in college life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• improved educational experiences</td>
<td>• validation of learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• lowered instances of academic probation</td>
<td>• higher self-esteem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• acquisition of academic skills</td>
<td>• ability to meet social needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• more academic involvement</td>
<td>• more complex worldview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• increased opportunity to write and speak</td>
<td>• greater openness to ideas different from one’s own</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• greater engagement in learning</td>
<td>• ability to bridge academic and social environments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• ability to meet academic needs</td>
<td>• improved involvement and connectedness within social realms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• greater intellectual richness</td>
<td>• more prepared for leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• intellectual empowerment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• more complex thinking</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• increased quantity and quality of learning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• ability to bridge academic and social environments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• improved involvement and connectedness academic realms</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Lenning & Ebbers (1999)
It is important to recognize that these two areas, the academic and the personal/social, are inextricably linked in a cycle of mutual dependence. It is common knowledge that when students feel academically inferior, they often begin to feel personally and socially inferior and vice versa. Learning communities can combat students’ feelings of inferiority by increasing both their academic and personal/social skills and thus their self-esteem in these areas.

Benefits specific to faculty. In their study of intersectionality in the members of a faculty learning community’s teaching and professional lives, Alejano-Steele, et al. (2011) found that participation in a learning community resulted in profound personal, professional, and/or teaching impacts, including continued dedication to life-long learning. Further, learning communities allow faculty to work together more closely and effectively; lead to increased continuity and integration in the curriculum; constitute a valuable activity for faculty development; help participating faculty to view their disciplines in a more revealing light; encourage faculty to share knowledge with one another; broaden faculty members’ knowledge about pedagogy and promote collaborative and active teaching; increase collegial trust; lead faculty to find their work with learning communities satisfying and appreciate their results on the amount and quality of students’ learning, students’ enjoyment of learning, and students’ values and satisfaction (Lenning & Ebbers, 1999, pp. 56-57).

In order to reap these benefits, there are many options for faculty interested in participating in learning communities: they can form their own faculty learning communities around topics of interest (Lenning & Ebbers, 1999; Alejano-Steele, et al., 2011); they can organize their courses into separate or combined learning-community classrooms (Nieto, 1992); they can organize student learning communities for which they serve as faculty sponsors (Lenning & Ebbers, 1999; Alejano-Steele, et al., 2011); or any combination of these options.
Faculty development. In order to work effectively in learning communities themselves or implement them in their classrooms, faculty must be proficient facilitators. To achieve this goal, Barr & Dailey (1996) suggest faculty become capable in the following eight skills: (1) The ability to refocus participants when necessary to avoid discussions from “bogging down”; (2) The ability to validate topics participants introduce as well as effectively transition between these topics; (3) The ability to hone in on group energy in order to steer discussions and keep them kindled; (4) The ability to continually invite participants’ feedback, input, questions, and opinions; (5) The ability to encourage cooperation and foster discussion; (6) The ability to coach participants into drawing on their prior knowledge; (7) The ability to model and endorse active listening; (8) The ability to proactively mediate conflicts among participants. Honing in on these essential facilitation skills will allow faculty to support and encourage participants while avoiding unnecessary conflict and keeping the learning community engaged and moving forward.

Student learning communities in teacher preparation. Teacher preparation programs have begun to embrace attempts to create community through moving to the cohort model based on research that shows enhanced learning through a sense of community (Dinsmore & Wenger, 2006). The cohort model defined by Dinsmore & Wegner (2006) involves students being enrolled in four or more classes together in a semester as a way to promote collaboration and team work. They report, “A sense of community encouraged in cohort structures can foster learning and discourage the intellectual and professional isolation of teachers” (Dinsmore & Wegner, 2006, p. 57) which speaks directly to Lortie’s (1975) concerns of teacher individualism. Further, the authors found that shared learning experiences can lead to three main benefits: formation of supportive peer groups, active involvement in cooperative learning, and increased
amount of knowledge gained on teaching and learning as the cohort spends time learning together (Dinsmore & Wenger, 2006). The authors admit, however, that the implementation of the cohort structure in teacher preparation programs is not always enough to cultivate a deeper sense of community (Dinsmore & Wenger, 2006). Creating a learning community of students and teachers dedicated to a specific cause such as social justice might be a more effective approach to creating a sense of community. Further, the authors note the lack of research on cohort models in undergraduate programs (Dinsmore & Wenger, 2006), situating my own research at the forefront of meeting a need in teacher preparation research.

Potential problems and solutions. Despite the myriad advantages of learning communities, many barriers stand in the way of students and faculty convening them within their institutions. As solutions to these barriers, researchers suggest, first and foremost, assembling a small group of interested parties—be it faculty, students, or student affairs personnel—to begin a discussion around implementing one or many learning communities at the college or university (Lenning & Ebbers, 1999). If enough interest arises, a plausible next step is to invite current learning community practitioners to speak with the president, dean, and/or provost, as their support is vital in the success of the learning community initiative.

Faculty buy-in may be difficult to achieve initially, as collaborative and active learning styles are often not emphasized in higher education which generally relies on lecturing. Further, their lack of experience and understanding with these methods of teaching may cause faculty to “be afraid of losing control of the classroom or not being perceived as an expert” (Lenning & Ebbers, 1999, p. 75). Exposing faculty to research results on active and collaborative learning may help ease this resistance. However, Lucas & Mott (1996) warn that instructors may react in a number of negative ways due to the disequilibrium that may result from changing their
instructional methods. The backlash may include, “(1) incorrectly communicated information and rumors; (2) polarization of faculty; (3) undermining loyalties; and (4) increased ambiguity about the project” (Lucas & Mott, 1996, p. 8).

Ultimately, the researchers suggest convening a small group of invested individuals to develop a team who will focus on the tasks specific to the types of learning communities they intend to create. They purport,

Planning and implementation should include an interdisciplinary focus on social and collaborative learning and on the construction of meaning and change, active and experiential student learning, making connections and synthesizing information across knowledge domains and from outside the classroom to the classroom, knowing and considering students’ backgrounds and characteristics in setting up student groups, relating values to knowledge within the community, developing a cooperative rather than a competitive environment, and tying multiple courses and semesters or terms into a cohesive package. (Lenning & Ebbers, 1999, p. 78)

While the planning and implementation of learning communities in higher education is no small feat, the endless benefits to both students and faculty—and thus the entire institution—make it worth the effort.

**Social Justice Education**

As with the literature on learning communities, I again utilized ERIC to search social justice and related terms in order to pinpoint its relevance in current educational research. The following table presents the results of the ERIC database searches I conducted on the individual terms as compared to their pairing with the term “education”:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Results of Individual Term</th>
<th>Results Published in the last 20 years</th>
<th>Term Paired with “Education”</th>
<th>Results of Term Paired with “Education”</th>
<th>Results Published in the last 20 years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>diversity</td>
<td>26,528</td>
<td>18,961</td>
<td>diversity education</td>
<td>898</td>
<td>650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>multicultural</td>
<td>18,985</td>
<td>10,836</td>
<td>multicultural education</td>
<td>12,335</td>
<td>6,770</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>equity</td>
<td>13,805</td>
<td>7,533</td>
<td>equity education</td>
<td>1,611</td>
<td>1,044</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>democratic</td>
<td>10,184</td>
<td>5,994</td>
<td>democratic education</td>
<td>598</td>
<td>467</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>social justice</td>
<td>8,827</td>
<td>6,773</td>
<td>social justice education</td>
<td>336</td>
<td>325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>egalitarian</td>
<td>837</td>
<td>438</td>
<td>egalitarian education</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>anti-bias</td>
<td>259</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>anti-bias education</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>anti-oppressive</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>anti-oppressive education</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These database search results tell us a number of things: (a) liberal terms that have become buzzwords in the field of education, such as “multicultural” and “diversity,” seem to be more prevalent than more critical terms, such as “anti-oppressive,” “egalitarian,” and “democratic”; (b) the terminology directly related to types of education is a much smaller pool than the terms disconnected from “education”; and (c) due to the fact that the majority of the articles were written in the last twenty years, the merging of the fields of social justice and education is a fairly recent phenomenon relative to the age of the field.

A cross-referenced search of the terms “social justice,” “learning community,” and “teacher preparation” produced no results. Further searches on multiple databases were unfruitful and I did not come across any literature that examines the use of learning communities in addressing issues of social justice in teacher preparation. While this makes my job of drawing linkages between these two fields difficult, it also constitutes a need for the research I have
undertaken in this project.

In the following section, I begin with discussion of the history and definition of social justice education. This is followed by a sketch of the individual and societal ills that scholars maintain predicate the need for social justice education. Next, I explore some of the different conceptualizations of social justice education, all of which center on the goal of inclusion and equity. I then discuss a number of theories that both support and shape social justice education. Finally, I end with a synthesis of social justice education and teacher preparation.

The History and Definition of Social Justice Education

Zajda, Majhanovich, & Rust (2006) note that social justice has a long-standing history with philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, and Kant; dating as far back as 427 B.C. They claim the term social justice was first used by Sicilian priest Luigi Taparelli d’Azeglio in 1840 and was popularized by Antonio Ramini-Serbati in 1848 (Zajda, Majhanovich, & Rust, 2006). While they note that social justice has a variety of different meanings in a variety of different contexts, they have found, “Most conceptions of social justice refer to an egalitarian society that is based on the principles of equality and solidarity, that understands and values human rights, and that recognizes the dignity of every human being (Zajda, Majhanovich, & Rust, 2006, p. 10). They tie this definition to the endorsement of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights endorsed internationally in 1948 (Zajda, Majhanovich, & Rust, 2006).

Adams, Bell, & Griffin (1997) claim, “The goal of social justice education is full and equal participation of all groups in a society that is mutually shaped to meet their needs” (p.3). This process needs to be equitable, self-determining, interdependent, democratic, participatory, collaborative, and promote agency (Adams, Bell, & Griffin, 1997). In addition, Kumashiro (2004) outlines four approaches to anti-oppressive education, which include: improving
experiences of traditionally and historically oppressed students; changing the knowledge that all
students gain about the experiences of people who have been oppressed and bothered;
challenging the hidden forces that privilege some and marginalize others; and addressing the
difficulties of practicing anti-oppressive education.

**The Need for Social Justice Education**

Theorists note that social justice education, anti-oppressive education, multicultural
education, equity education, critical education, and diversity education—among other
terminology—are often used interchangeably. Kumashiro (2004) elucidates his views on
addressing issues of oppression and social justice in education,

> The question for educational reformers is not *whether* schools should be addressing issues
of oppression. Schools are always and already addressing oppression, often by
reinforcing it or at least allowing it to continue playing out unchallenged. The question
needs to be how schools should be differently addressing issues of oppression. And
therein lies the reason for re-centering education on issues of social justice, that is, on a
social movement against oppression. (p. xxiv)

To summarize, Kumashiro believes stakeholders should not be asking themselves whether issues
of oppression and social justice should be addressed in schools, but rather how they should be
addressed, for schools are already addressing these issues in a way which functions to uphold the
status quo through use of oppression.

Many social justice advocates argue that understanding oppression is central to
understanding social justice. According to Adams, Bell, & Griffin (1997), all isms (i.e. racism,
sexism, classism, heterosexism, and ableism) are connected in an “over-arching system of
domination” (p. 5). Further, joining Kumashiro (2004) and Britzman (2003) in their concern with
the perpetuation of commonsensical notions, Adams, Bell, and Griffin (1997) argue that “'common sense’ knowledge and assumptions make it difficult to see oppression clearly” (p. 3).

**A theory of oppression.** Oppression has been identified by many scholars as the root issue which social justice education attempts to alleviate. Linking their approach to Freire’s notion of praxis, Adams, Bell, and Griffin (1997) argue that a true understanding of social justice must be predicated by comprehension of the theory of oppression, for “practice is always shaped by theory, whether for or informal, tacit or expressed” (p. 4). She argues that a theoretical approach to social justice education gives educators a lens through which to analyze their own intentions and means of carrying them out in the classroom by providing a framework from which their decisions can be made. She also points out the necessity of returning to and refining our theory in order to deal with questions and challenges that will inevitably arise from doing the work of educating for social justice.

Hardiman & Jackson (1997) conclude that “social oppression exists when one social group, whether knowingly or unconsciously, exploits another social group for its own benefit (p. 17). They categorize members of oppressed and oppressor groups as agents or targets of oppression, noting that the intersectionality of peoples’ identities (Collins, 1991) often place them in both groups simultaneously. As illustrated in the table below, race and ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, psychical/ psychological/ developmental disability, class, and age all determine an individual’s group membership in the US (Hardiman & Jackson, 1997, p. 20).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGENTS</th>
<th>TARGETS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Race and Ethnic</td>
<td>Whites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Orientation</td>
<td>Heterosexuals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>Christians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical/ Psychological/ Developmental Disability</td>
<td>Able persons</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
According to Hardiman & Jackson (1997), *agents* of oppression are members of dominant social groups who were either born into or have acquired privilege who consciously or unconsciously exploit members of target groups in order to keep their social status intact. *Targets* of oppression have been exploited, subjugated, and marginalized not only by agent groups, but their systems and institutions as well. Freire (1993) explores the ways in which agents as well as targets become entrapped in a cross-generational and dehumanizing system of domination.

Hardiman & Jackson (1997) outline four key elements that perpetuate social oppression:

- The agent group has the power to define and name reality and determine what is “normal,” “real,” or “correct.”
- Harassment, discrimination, exploitation, marginalization, and other forms of differential and unequal treatment are institutionalized and systematic. These acts often do not require the conscious thought or effort of individual members of the agent group but are rather part of business as usual that become embedded in social structures over time.
- Psychological colonization of the target group occurs through socializing the oppressed to internalize their oppressed condition and collude with the oppressor's ideology and social system. This is what Freire refers to as the oppressed playing “host” to the oppressor (1993).
- The target group's culture, language, and history is misrepresented, discounted, or eradicated and the dominant group's culture is imposed. (p. 17)
In sum, agent groups essentially rewrite history from the perspective of the dominant position in order to create a reality that affords them privilege through the subjugation of target groups and individuals. This happens on many levels—the individual, the institutional, and the societal/cultural—each of which are mutually reinforcing (Hardiman & Jackson, 1997). The individual level includes the conscious and unconscious beliefs, attitudes, actions and behaviors of individual people that help to maintain oppression, such as harassment, rape, discrimination, and racial/ethnic/religious slurs. The institutional level, which enforces oppression in a more conscious and far-reaching manner, includes such institutions as family, government, industry, education, and religion. Examples of institutional oppression include housing and employment discrimination based on race, gender, or sexual orientation. The societal/cultural level of oppression includes the various ways in which cultural norms place restrictions individuals and institutions based on notions of right/wrong, good/evil, and acceptable/unacceptable.

Goodman (2011) warns that dichotomizing people into groups such as privileged/oppressed or agent/target promotes binary modes of thinking, which lead to separation and disconnection. She explores separation and disconnection in relationship to self-interest, arguing, “Instead of defining self-interest as simply a selfish concern, we can define it more broadly to include benefits to oneself that do not necessarily exclude benefits to others as well” (Goodman, 2011, p. 129). Goodman (2011) considers self-interest as a continuum that includes “me-oriented” individualistic self-interest which is concerned only with benefiting the self, “you-and-me-oriented” mutual self-interest which is concerned with benefiting both parties, and “us-oriented” interdependent self-interest which “blurs the boundaries between you and me” (p. 130).

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<th>Individualistic “Me”</th>
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Adams, Bell, and Griffin (1997) identify the features of oppression as: **pervasiveness**; restricting; hierarchical; complex, multiple, cross-cutting relationships; internalized; and **“isms”**: shared and distinctive characteristics. She argues that the **pervasiveness** of oppression is characterized by its presence on multiple levels—personal, institutional, and systemic. It is **restricting** in the way that it limits individuals and groups not only materially and structurally, but psychically and psychologically as well by constraining self-development, self-determination, and agency. Oppression also thrives on a **hierarchical** relationship between privilege and domination, where members of agent groups benefit from the subjugation of target groups. The **complex, multiple, cross-cutting relationships** of oppression refer to the intersectionality of individuals’ identity (Collins, 1991), noting that people are members of different and often opposing groups simultaneously which effects how they can be advantaged or disadvantaged in different situations. According to Adams, Bell, and Griffin (1997), oppression becomes **internalized** by way of infiltrating the human psyche, leading people to believe that it is warranted or deserved due to individual rather than structural and systemic causes. Finally, oppression functions through separate **isms**—such as racism, sexism, and classism—which “mutually reinforce” one another in “an overarching system of domination” (Adams, Bell, & Griffin, 1997, p. 5).

Using the metaphor of a birdcage to exemplify the restrictive, overarching properties of oppression while recognizing its many-faceted extensions, feminist theorist Marilyn Frye (1983) offers,

> If you look very closely at just one wire in the cage, you cannot see the other wires. If your conception of what is before you is determined by this myopic focus, you could look at that one wire, up and down the length of it, and be unable to see why a bird would not
just fly around the wire any time it wanted to go somewhere. Furthermore, even if, one
day at a time, you myopically inspected each wire, you still could not see why a bird
would gave trouble going past the wires to get anywhere. There is no physical property of
any one wire, nothing that the closest scrutiny could discover, that will reveal how a bird
could be inhibited or harmed by it except in the most accidental way. It is only when you
step back, stop looking at the wires one by one, microscopically, and take a macroscopic
view of the whole cage, that you can see why the bird does not go anywhere; and then
you will see it in a moment. It will require no great subtlety of mental powers. It is
perfectly obvious that the bird is surrounded by a network of systematically related
barriers, no one of which would be the least hindrance to its flight, but which, by their
relations to each other, are as confining as the solid walls of a dungeon.

Frye exemplifies the complexity of oppression and the vast, interwoven properties which keep it
in place and ever-eluding escape. Oppression is a nebulous entity and an insurmountable obstacle
to society and its citizens.

According to Goodman (2011), the individualism promoted by our culture leads to an
individualistic analysis of oppression, blaming inequities on individuals without seeing their
systemic roots. She argues that individualism makes it difficult for members of privileged or
agent groups to see themselves part of a social group which benefits from the inequality created
by oppressing target groups. Instead, members of privileged groups avoid the guilt associated
with examining the system that provided them with unearned success, blaming individuals for
the prejudice and bigotry that leads to individual social inequalities.

Conceptualizations of Social Justice Education

Educators and pedagogues who advocate social justice education often do so from
different standpoints—be they queer, critical, feminist, or built upon another theoretical foundation. As a result, social justice education is conceptualized in different ways, all of which center on the notion that education which promotes social justice is emancipatory (Freire, 1993).

**Anti-oppressive education.** Kumashiro (2004) prefers the term *anti-oppressive education* due to its recognition of the root of the problem rather than the cure. He notes, “The field of anti-oppressive education draws on many activist traditions, crafting links between feminist, critical, multicultural, queer, postcolonial, and other movements towards social justice” (p. xxvi), organizing the recent approaches suggested by educators and researchers to address oppression in the classroom into four overlapping methodologies.

The first methodology focuses on working to improve the experiences of marginalized students. This begins with the recognition that not only are schools breeding grounds for discrimination, harassment, exclusion, and prejudice, but that teachers and staff often fail to intervene these detrimental occurrences or support students who are victims of such violence in effective ways. In order to alter these conditions, Kumashiro (2004) urges teachers to transform their schools into safe and affirming spaces where support and advocacy resources are available.

The second methodology focuses on the entire student body, not just those who have been excluded or marginalized. This starts with the assumption that students bring to school prior prejudices which derive from gaining incomplete knowledge from family and peers of those who are different from them. It is thus the school’s job to broaden student knowledge about different religions, gender identities, races, and so forth through diversity and multicultural education efforts.

The third methodology focuses on society at large, challenging the broader implications of social dynamics that feed off of privilege and oppression. This begins with identifying the role
of social structures in perpetuating hierarchies, stereotypes, and norms, which are often hard to see due to their being embedded in the cycle of business as usual. Educators must guide students through the difficult processes of recognizing, critiquing, and resisting the harmful ideologies and daily procedures that keep society functioning in the same oppressive way. Ultimately, students must learn to identify and challenge their own privilege.

The final methodology addresses the difficulty of practicing anti-oppressive education. This begins with an acknowledgment on the part of educators’ of their comfort with the repetition of commonsensical practices and ideals, which Kumashiro (2004) notes are frequently oppressive. People often avoid engaging with the uncomfortable knowledge that functions to question the ways they interact with and perceive the world around them. However, in order to catalyze change, educators and students alike need to reflect on their own subconscious resistance to expanding their perspectives.

Kumashiro (2004) recognizes that many of the above approaches may seem contradictory, but purports that it is an ever-changing field which aims to learn from varying perspectives in order to find some combination of each to address the complex, context-specific issues students, teachers, and schools may face. He claims,

Anti-oppressive education constantly turns its lens of analysis inward as it explores ways that its own perspectives and practices make certain changes possible but others, impossible; and it constantly turns its lens outward to explore the insights made possible by perspectives on teaching and learning that have yet to be adequately addressed in the field of education. Anti-oppressive education is premised on the notion that its work is never done. (Kumashiro, 2004, p. xxvi)

Anti-oppressive education is committed to examining itself as well as the issues of social justice
it aims to address through both a microscopic and macroscopic lens in order to keep relevant the never-ending work of challenging oppression.

**Multicultural education.** Nieto (1996) argues that multicultural education is education for social justice. Linking multicultural education to Freire’s (1993) view of praxis as the process of connecting theory and practice, action and reflection, Nieto (1996) maintains, “developing a multicultural perspective means learning how to think in more inclusive and expansive ways, reflection on what we learn, and putting our learning into action” (p. 316). She believes channeling youth’s preoccupation with fairness, which happens at the developmental stage of adolescence, to issues of social justice can help avoid feelings of anger and resentment that often lead them to feel alienated from school and ultimately remove themselves from it mentally or physically. Having the opportunity to work towards meaningful goals which affect not only them but the communities in which they live can help students to practice “day-to-day democracy,” a Deweyan goal that is often sidetracked by ability tracking, biased testing, ethnocentric curricula, and traditional pedagogy (Nieto, 1996).

Social justice education and multicultural education alike are concerned with the broader societal issues of power that lead to social inequities, topics that are often left out of the implicit curriculum in schools. Nieto (1996) claims,

The fact that social structures and power are rarely discussed in school should come as no surprise. Schools are organizations fundamentally concerned with maintaining the status quo and not exposing contradictions that make people uncomfortable in a society that has democratic ideals but wherein democratic realities are not always apparent. Such contradictions include the many manifestations of inequality. Yet schools are supposed to wipe out these inequalities. To admit that inequality exists and that it is even perpetuated
by the very institutions charged with doing away with it are topics far too dangerous to discuss. Nevertheless, such issues are at the heart of a broadly conceptualized multicultural perspective because the subject matter of schooling is society, with all its wrinkles and warts and contradictions. And because society is concerned with ethics and with the distribution of power, status, and rewards, education must focus on these concerns as well. (p. 317)

Rather than hiding from the contradictions they impose, schools—if they intend to right the inequalities they perpetuate—must expose these contradictions through use of a multicultural/social justice framework. This long-standing tradition of sweeping the undesirable under the rug benefits only the oppressors, who will remain in power until business as usual is contested and replaced with a more just alternative.

**Theoretical Frameworks for Social Justice Education**

Across multiple disciplines, theories have arisen that support and promote social justice education. In the following sub-sections I discuss how social identity development theory, intellectual development theory, and deconstruction—which is engaged by many critical theories, such as queer theory and intersectionality theory—provide theoretical supports for social justice education.

**Deconstruction.** Deconstruction promotes social justice by dismantling binarism, which Derrida (1967), Foucault (1969), and a number of other critical theorists argue the Western world relies on to categorize objects, people, and concepts into opposing groups—such as good/evil, black/white, and right/wrong. Goodman (2011), who specifically studies privileged groups in relationship to social justice, argues, “Dividing people into dominant and subordinated groups reflects and promotes dualistic and dichotomous thinking” which does not take into account the
“degrees, gradations, and variations within and between social groups” (p. 6). Critical theory, queer theory, and feminist theory alike—the theoretical approaches that guide social justice education (Adams, Bell, & Griffin, 1997)—are each committed to the deconstruction of the binaries that support othering and injustice.

Deconstruction, according to Derrida (1981), is necessary in order to pacify what he considers a “violent hierarchy” of binary oppositions. Noting that binaries are not arbitrary modes of classification, but instead concerned with and reliant on an unequal distribution of power, he argues, “One of the two terms governs the other (axiologically, logically, etc.), or has the upper hand,” (Derrida, 1981, p. 41). Linguistically, terms refer to concepts which often have much more complex meanings than they may seem which allows for the domination of one binary through the subjugation of its opposition.

The theme of deconstruction is also a central focus of queer theory which strives to disrupt the human tendency to rely on such stringent classification, citing its danger to both other those who do not fit neatly into one box or another, as well as perpetuate a culture of difference rather than acceptance (Jagose, 1996). According to Britzman’s (1995) study of limits, also referred to as “the question of thinkability,” certain concepts are simply unthinkable to many people. A derivative of Foucault’s “structures of intelligibility,” the study of limits explores the cognitive limiting that people subconsciously perform in order to protect their own identity, philosophy, and way of life. She claims,

Pedagogical thought must begin to acknowledge that receiving knowledge is a problem for the learner and the teacher, particularly when the knowledge one already has possesses or is possessed by works as an entitlement to one’s ignorance or when the
knowledge encountered cannot be incorporated because it disrupts how the self might imagine itself and others. (Britzman, 1995, p. 159)

This illuminates the need for both the student and the teacher to be guided through the process of deconstructing their prior knowledge in order to be able to accept new ideas without fear of losing themselves or affecting their views of others.

Intersectionality theory, the brainchild of feminist scholars Collins (1991) and Crenshaw (1991), may be able to help with the difficult process of deconstructing the prior ideas which lay the foundation for our understanding of the world. Intersectionality theory notes the fluidity of identity, reminding us that people are members of different and sometimes opposing social groups simultaneously (Collins, 1991; Crenshaw, 1991). An intersectional approach advocates focusing on the point where certain aspects of our identities meet rather than the rigid lines between these identities. In short, intersectionality theory rejects binary modes of thought in preference of more pluralistic and encompassing conceptualizations of ourselves and the world around us.

**Social identity development theory.** Social identity development theory outlines the complex process of target and agent identity development (Hardiman & Jackson, 1997). This is an important process to understand as, though it is a normal part of human development, both teachers and students may be guided through this process further in order to work towards embracing social justice. It is presented in stages for ease of understanding, though it is noted that people do not necessarily move through the stages in order, but instead experience multiple stages at a time depending on the intersectionality of their identities. The five stages of social identity development theory are as follows: *Naïve/No Social Consciousness, Acceptance, Resistance, Redefinition, and Internalization* (Hardiman & Jackson, 1997).
Stage I—Naïve/No Social Consciousness. This stage generally takes place between birth and early childhood. During this time, individuals transition from a place of zero awareness of social identity into a place where they begin to become aware of the differences between their social group membership and that of others. Parents, teachers, and peers are the primary role models in this stage and “convey important messages through their words and silences, actions and inactions” (Hardiman & Jackson, 1997, p. 24). Formal education, with both its formal and hidden curriculum, plays a large part in teaching young people to “learn and adopt an ideology or belief system about their own and other social identity groups” (Hardiman & Jackson, 1997, p. 24).

Stage II—Acceptance. This stage normally takes place beginning in childhood when individuals begin to accept what they have learned about their own and other social groups, namely the superiority of agent groups and inferiority of target groups, and can last well into adulthood. Agents and targets can have juxtaposing yet similar experiences in the two manifestations of this phase—either they actively or passively accept that they are members of an agent or target group—and react in ways which perpetuate the cycle of oppression regardless of the manifestation of their acceptance.

Stage III—Resistance. This stage generally takes place in the adult years when agents and targets begin to question and reject the ideologies they had previously accepted. Recognizing oppression and its role at the individual, structural, and systemic levels plays a leading role in this stage. Agents often develop a negative awareness of their social identity and resent their membership in the oppressor group. They often react in anger as they begin to recognize their own privilege before finally attempting to form a new social identity. Targets, who can experience a range of emotions from anger to hurt, pain to rage, frequently react in hostility.
towards agent groups in the Resistance stage. This may well lead to them taking the position of “anti-agent”—anti-White, anti-Christian, anti-male, etc. (Hardiman & Jackson, 1997, p. 26).

Stage IV—Redefinition. The ultimate goal of this stage is to envision and create an identity that can function independently of the overarching system of oppression and domination. Here, agents begin to develop a more positive view of their social identity, realizing that all groups have faults and recognizing avenues within their own social group that can be used to catalyze personal and cultural change. Above all, targets in the Redefinition stage are bent on autonomously renaming themselves, without concern for the dominant views of the agent culture (Hardiman & Jackson, 1997, p. 27). Their quest for social identity often brings targets back to the traditional roots of one’s heritage and culture and they begin to reclaim terms that may have been used to exclude them in the past, such as Queer or Black.

Stage V—Internalization. In this stage, individuals attempt to integrate their new identity into all facets of their daily life. While Hardiman & Jackson (1997) note, “As long as a person lives in an oppressive society, the process of uncovering previously unrecognized areas of Acceptance and Resistance will be ongoing...” both agents and targets remain aware of the past but begin to look toward catalyzing change for a more just future. Agents react unconsciously and spontaneously against manifestations of oppression. Targets experience a great deal of pride in their newly-formed social identity and group membership. They begin to empathize with members of other targeted groups, recognizing the intersectionality of their own and others’ identities and how they may likely be members of both target and agent groups simultaneously.

Intellectual development theory. Intellectual development theory supports social justice education by outlining the evolving stages people progress through as their intellectual capacity expands. In her book, Promoting Diversity and Social Justice: Educating People from Privileged
Groups, Goodman (2011) outlines the intellectual development model introduced by Perry (1970) and expanded upon by Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule (1986). Combined, their research explored the intellectual development of white, elite college men and women from all walks of life.

Belenky, et al. (1986) identify the first stage in the model as Silence, in which women felt as if they had no voice or power, feared men, and relied on outside sources for information. This was succeeded by Perry’s (1970) Dualism/Knowledge Received stage, which he considered the first. In this stage, knowledge, which is seen as a collection of facts, is received from the authority, not created. It is characterized by binary modes of thought, in which knowledge is dichotomized into right/wrong, good/bad, either/or, us/them. People are generally frustrated with ambiguity in this stage as they struggle to accept multiple perspectives.

The next stage, Multiplicity/Subjective Knowledge, is where people begin to question the concept of absolute truth and recognize that truth is a matter of opinion, as is all knowledge. While their thinking has become more complex, people in this stage rely on feelings and intuitions to come to their own ethical decisions rather than using logic to assess different positions. Goodman (2011) points out that is difficult for people to engage in critical thinking during the first three stages.

In the Relativism/Procedural Knowledge stage people begin to realize that knowledge is contextual and gain the ability to evaluate opinions, expecting concrete reasons rather than common sense to support them. Here, they apply a procedural approach to finding solutions and answering questions. Belenky, et al. (1986) identified two different types of procedural knowers: separate knowers, who use objective methods of understanding others’ opinions; and connected knowers, who take a more subjective approach, putting themselves in the position of the other.
The final stage, *Commitment in Relativism/Constructed Knowledge*, finds people are able to synthesize the knowledge they construct with that which they receive from others in order to produce their own distinct worldview. People in this stage are complex, critical thinkers who take a stand on a variety of issues based on informed reasoning. It is during this stage that people can become truly committed to social justice.

**Social Justice Education in Teacher Preparation**

Most advocates of social justice education note that preparing teachers to challenge oppression is difficult work which faces a multitude of barriers. They remind us that many people do not recognize the complicity of schools’ routine practices in perpetuating racism, classism, sexism, heterosexism, ableism, and other forms of oppression. Further, many do not agree that it is the school’s place to address these issues, and those who do face challenging their own commonsensical views of education and the role of the teacher.

**Barriers to social justice education in teacher preparation.** According to Kumashiro (2004), teachers who embrace social justice “often confront institutional demands, disciplinary constraints, and social pressures that significantly hinder their ability to bring about change” (p. 2). Proceduralism is one such barrier which social justice education both faces and attempts to dismantle. According to Kagan (1992), “Procedural routines appear to be the sine qua non of teaching” (p.162). Most teacher preparation programs today seem to share her sentiment that teachers should be trained in “procedural, not theoretical knowledge” (Kagan, 1992).

Oakes & Lipton (2003) note that teacher preparation programs are reduced to proceduralism due to the demands placed on them by state departments of education as well as certification organization like the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) which endorse “professional standards” that are highly procedural and standardized.
Standardization, Cushner, McClelland, & Safford (1996) note, was important for the second wave schools which intentionally likened themselves to factories. Unfortunately, while the industrial age is well behind us, public schools still function on many of the same ideals—

Teachers and other school personnel are hired based on well-defined standards of certification. Standards of dress and behavior for both school personnel and students is enforced through well-publicized, standardized rules. Curriculum is based largely on standardized textbooks and on a district-wide course of study which each teacher is expected to follow. Standards of performance for students and teachers are well-defined and grades reflect students’ ability to “learn” standardized lessons as demonstrated through standardized paper-and-pencil tests. (Cushner, McClelland, and Safford, 1996, p. 12)

These industrial-era procedures function to limit the actions of both teachers and students, limiting their ability to act in ways that promote dialog and criticality, two concepts that are central to social justice education (Freire, 1993). Further, Kirp (1976) points out that schools and their governing bodies use procedures and bureaucracy to their advantage while not offering the same rights and privileges to their students.

Not only do the organizations that govern teacher preparation programs, such as NCATE, promote standardization, which prohibits the dialogic learning that Freire (1993) proposes, but by proxy they also offer teachers, new and old, a false sense of control over the unpredictable nature of the classroom and the learning that takes place within it. Oakes & Lipton (2003) suggest, “Mastering the ‘practical matters’ of lesson plans, discipline routines, seating charts, learning unfamiliar curricula, test preparation, and more, provide a sense (if brief) of security and
protection from the blizzard of unfamiliar demands and responsibilities beginning teacher face” (p. 437). However, Oakes & Lipton (2003) report that new teachers commonly complain about the “procedures and bureaucracies” that get in the way of their teaching and effect students negatively by derailing both the teacher’s and students’ attention from teaching and learning.

Anderson (1983, 1985) categorized knowledge as declarative or procedural. Declarative knowledge denotes what, such as the time of day, while procedural knowledge explains how to tell time. Paris, Lipson, and Wixson (1983) present a third type of knowledge, conditional knowledge, which denotes when, why, and under what conditions declarative or procedural knowledge should be drawn upon. Pajares (1992) notes, “A teacher may know classroom management procedures and how to execute them but be uncertain as to when or under what conditions a particular one is appropriate,” (p. 312). Pajares (1992) explores the ways in which beliefs and procedures are linked, purporting that while teachers’ beliefs may be difficult to change, modifying procedures is quite easy. Procedures, however, are deeply imbedded in the beliefs of those who create them, though not necessarily in the teachers who enact them.

**Breaking down the barriers to social justice education in teacher preparation.** Social justice education derives its efforts from myriad disciplines and practices, including laboratory and intergroup education, experiential education, Black and ethnic studies, feminist pedagogies, critical pedagogies and liberatory education, and social and cognitive development theories (Adams, Bell, & Griffin, 1997). From these fields, Adams, Bell, & Griffin (1997) has drawn “pedagogical dilemmas” that should shape how social justice educators should teach rather than what they teach:

1. balancing the emotional and cognitive components of the learning process;
(2) acknowledging and supporting the person (the individual student’s experience) while illuminating the systemic (the interactions among social groups);

(3) attending to social relations within the classroom;

(4) utilizing reflection and experience as tools for student-centered learning; and

(5) valuing awareness, personal growth, and change as outcomes of the learning process.

(p. 30)

Social justice educators must be hyper-aware of the dynamics in their classrooms, paying attention to the safety of their students and setting up guidelines for group behavior. They must ground their teaching in the present moment, illuminating difficult and abstract theories with real-life examples. They must guide their students in naming and understanding without judgment or blame the behaviors that emerge through the group process. They must promote self-reflection on the part of their students as the starting point for a deeper, more macroscopic view of society’s ills. Finally, social justice educators must ceaselessly promote awareness, personal growth, and social change. But how are teachers to learn these skills without being taught to do so by the programs that prepare them?

In order to find a synthesis between proceduralism and theoreticism, Freire (1993) offers the notion of praxis, or the marriage of the aforementioned two methodologies; he notes,

We must not negate practice for the sake of theory. To do so would reduce theory to a pure verbalism or intellectualism. By the same token, to negate theory for the sake of practice, as in the use of dialogue as conversation s to run the risk of losing oneself in the disconnectedness of practice. It is for this reason that I never advocate either a theoretic elitism or a practice ungrounded in theory, but the unity between theory and practice.

(p. 382)
Taking Freire’s (1993) advice, a balance between theory and practice must be found through integrating both approaches rather than favoring one over the other. In the pursuit of socially just pedagogy, Oakes & Lipton (2003) argue in their book, *Teaching to Change the World*, that a blending of theory and practice is necessary, and to this end, “Teachers must defy the myths and metaphors that permeate schools’ ordinary routines and conventions” (p. 436).

Despite these barriers, there has been a recent movement of teacher preparation programs who aim to address issues of anti-oppressive education. Kumashiro (2004) surveyed eight such programs throughout the U.S. in order to further understand their aims. He found that there were three popular images of “good teachers” these programs intended to prepare: *teachers as learned practitioners, teachers as researchers, and teachers as professionals*.

*Teachers as Learned Practitioners.* This image is based on the premise that teachers need to learn three main things: 1) dominant theories of who young students are, how they develop, and how they learn; 2) content knowledge about what they intend to teach; and 3) how to teach, with a focus on classroom management and methods. The author notes that these programs often avoid urging pre-service teachers to trouble the knowledge they receive or even acknowledge the limits of this knowledge.

*Teacher as Researcher.* This vision centers on the idea that teachers should be lifelong learners. Programs that adopt this approach to educating future teachers often focus on research projects as well as self-reflection journals, essays, and seminar discussions of their classroom experiences. The issue here is that while there is grand possibility for these assignments, they often do not directly address issues of social justice, but instead focus on procedures or the “basics” of classroom management or content knowledge.

*Teacher as Professional.* Programs that adhere to the discourse of professionalism place
value on their role in the certification process, promoting the goals of the state department and
the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). These programs and
organizations fix the identity of the teacher and standardize what it is they are supposed to do,
leaving little room for exploration of the societal issues students and teachers alike face both
inside educational institutions and out.

Noting the restrictiveness of the preceding three teacher identities, Kumashiro (2004)
suggests three alternative discourses: preparing teachers for crisis, preparing teachers for
uncertainty, preparing teachers for healing, and preparing teachers for activism.

Preparing Teachers for Crisis. This methodology deals specifically with the intended
curriculum. Kumashiro (2004) defines crisis as “a state of emotional discomfort that calls on
students to make some change” (p. 28). This discomfort can range from guilt or anger to
disorientation and signifies that they are on the verge of making a shift in their thinking or
actions due to being confronted with troubling knowledge of which they were previously
unaware. Teachers must be aware that while crisis can lead to change, it can also lead to an even
stronger resistance to change. To address this, teachers should implement conversations,
readings, and activities that will help their students work through the complexity of redefining
their worldview. While this is cumbersome—and some might even consider unethical—work,

If students are not experiencing crisis, they likely are not learning things that challenge
the knowledge they have already learned that supports the status quo, which means they
are not learning to recognize and challenge the oppression that plays out daily in their
lives. What is unethical is an approach to teaching and learning that does not involve
crisis. Learning is not a comforting process that merely repeats or affirms what students
have already learned. Learning is a disarming process that allows students to escape
uncritical, complacent repetition of their prior knowledge and actions. (Kumashiro, 2004, p. 30)

Preparing teachers for crisis means gearing them up not only for the difficult work of guiding their students through the process of disrupting the discourse of business as usual, but also being prepared to travel along this road themselves. Ultimately, it means disregarding the notion that education is neutral or comfortable.

**Preparing Teachers for Uncertainty.** Students learn a great deal from their teachers’ unintended curriculum, which often contradicts the intended curriculum. This methodology focuses on making the hidden curriculum visible and providing students with the skills to make sense of it. Kumashiro (2004) views these unintended lessons not as barriers to anti-oppressive education, but rather as jumping-off points to examining how oppression functions unnoticed and unchallenged in our classrooms and society. He argues, “Ironically, we need to put front and center the very things we do not want in our teaching, the very things we do not even know are in our teaching” (Kumashiro, 2004, p. 37) in order to radically transform what it means to teach.

**Preparing Teachers for Healing.** This approach is informed by Buddhism, and addresses the human tendency to suffer. Buddhism strives to break down the binaries—such as self/other, wrong/right, us/them—that the knowledge we have of the world is centered on. Kumashiro (2004) purports,

> Such binaries are problematic not only for reinforcing hierarchies of one party over another, but also for excluding third parties, as when binaries of, say, male and female make sense only because other, intersexed genders have been excluded…our language and knowledge always and already operate within a binary logic… (p. 41)

Binaries cause suffering as we attempt to fit ourselves and others into the pre-existing boxes
created for us. A healing approach to education informed by “socially engaged Buddhism” supports a breaking down of these binaries in order to end the suffering that they inevitably cause. In order to do so, we must succumb to the reality that everything, including knowledge, is impermanent and learn to embrace its constant evolution.

*Preparing Teachers for Activism.* This methodology involves “queer” activism, which Kumashiro (2004) defines as actions that addresses and disrupts normalcy, for “Being normal requires thinking in only certain ways, feeling only certain things, and doing only certain things” (p. 44). This restricts our ability to think, feel, and express ourselves, which is detrimental to our personal and social growth. Queer activists are committed to exposing the status quo and revolutionizing society through alternatives that are socially just. Kumashiro (2004) argues, “Like queer activism, teacher education needs to involve challenging both the institutional practices that perpetuate an oppressive norm and our emotional responses to and discomfort with things that are queer” (p. 45).

Guiding teachers towards anti-oppressive education by way of queer activism, Kumashiro (2004) asks us to ponder:

What would teacher education look like if we placed a priority on examining why we feel comfortable with only certain kinds of teaching? Why do certain teaching practices feel like they are not “real” teaching? Why do certain teaching practices result in students learning things that they feel are not what they are supposed to be learning? How might queer ways of teaching and the queer things we are learning suggest very different ways of making sense of ourselves and our world? How does calling these teachings and learnings “queer” help and hinder our efforts to work toward social justice? (p. 45)

Examining these questions leads us closer to understanding and embracing anti-oppressive
education.

Summary

Learning communities and social justice education are two relatively new fields—both emerging in the past twenty years—in the realm of education. Each field provides enormous benefits not only to students and teachers, but to our institutions and societal structures as well. As noted, there exists a gap in the literature on the use of learning communities towards social justice, especially in teacher preparation. My project is concerned with not only imagining, but realizing the possibilities of these fields being merged. Weiler and Maher (2002) argue,

... examples of transformative pedagogy, the need to respect and encourage the voices of students, curriculum which critiques popular culture and analyzes social inequality are invaluable to prospective teachers. Moreover, progressive programs educating prospective teachers need to include both models of progressive pedagogy and curriculum and courses exploring the historical and contemporary politics of education, to give prospective teachers tools of analysis and action. (p. 2)

I argue that if teacher preparation programs intend to be progressive rather than regressive, they have a responsibility to prepare their pre-service teachers to be critical, reflexive, and informed on issues of social justice. Learning communities committed to social justice—which queer the notion of the classroom, the individualized roles of teachers and students, the binary separation of theory and practice, and the proceduralized processes of teaching and learning—may well be the avenue through which to reach these aims.
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

“Everything we do in life is rooted in theory.”

-bell hooks

In this chapter I outline the methodological approaches I utilized in creating and implementing a research project which aimed to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the experiences of the participants in a learning community devoted to exploring issues of social justice?

2. How does exploration of the intersectionality of identity, power, privilege, and oppression promote social justice?

3. How might teacher preparation programs educate their students to build critically queer, feminist, intersectional, anti-oppressive pedagogies?

As my research questions state, the goal of this project was to document and examine the individual, collective, personal, and professional experiences of the twelve pre-service teachers who convened to create a social justice learning community. In this learning community, participants explored the intersectionality of identity and investigated power, privilege, and oppression in order to build anti-oppressive pedagogies. Atkinson & Hammersley (1994) note that social research “has been directed toward contributing to disciplinary knowledge rather than toward solving practical problems” (p. 253). To make my research applicable to reality, I created curriculum for the project which can be utilized as a starting point for promoting social justice in teacher preparation programs. In fact, I am currently in the process of modifying the curriculum
for implementation with the entire cohort of the Practicum Program, from which I drew the
participants of this study.

I entered this project with the aim of addressing and uncovering themes central to critical,
feminist, and queer theories and methodologies, both in the creation and implementation of
research project itself as well as in the analysis of the data. Theory is often absent from the
teaching profession which relies heavily on procedures, as Giroux (1983) points out in his book
Theory and Resistance in Education. It is this reality that led me to not only look for these
themes in analyzing the data collected, but to also to make these themes the theoretical
foundations for creating the curriculum of the learning community.

Methodology

I utilized qualitative ethnographic research methods in this project, which align with the
project’s purpose of collecting data on the subjective experiences of the participants of the study.
Like Green (2014), I view research as “a collaborative process to be engaged in by both the
researcher and participants” (p. 156). Further, Green (2014) stresses that research should be
“emancipatory, or, in other words, used to liberate people and communities, rather than further
oppress, marginalize, essentialize, or exploit” (p. 156); I have employed critical, feminist, and
queer methodologies, which embrace these goals.

In this study, I convened a six-week learning community of pre-service teachers currently
enrolled in the Practicum Program, a dual-major elementary and special education program at
Southwestern State University. Having worked as a graduate assistant for Practicum over the
past year provided me with a rich background in the everyday functioning of the program as well
as its expectations for its students. This provided me with the ability to connect my research to
the larger picture of the program as a whole as well as its societal context (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008).

I relied heavily on participant observation, which is noted as “a uniquely humanistic, interpretive approach” to research as juxtaposed with traditional quantitative forms (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994, p. 249). Participant observation, although not without its limitations (which I address later in this chapter), recognizes that “we cannot study the social world without being a part of it” (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994, p. 249). Further, participant observation enables the researcher to be part of “a shared social world” with their participants (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994, p. 256). As a member of the Practicum community, it was important to me to take a humanistic approach to my research that did not create a separation between my role as a member of the community and my role as a researcher.

The second method of collecting data that I utilized was intersectional reflexive participant journaling. Jones (2010) notes that “engaging in intersectional reflexivity requires one to acknowledge one's intersecting identities, both marginalized and privileged, and then employ self-reflexivity, which moves one beyond self-reflection to the often uncomfortable level of self-implication” (p. 122). As both students and teachers from privileged backgrounds, it was important for the participants to be aware of the multiple identities they embody and how these affect both their teaching and learning.

According to Atkinson & Hammersley (2007), “the social worlds studied by ethnographers have often been devoid of written documents other than those produced by the fieldworkers themselves” (p. 157). For this reason, I felt it was important to have the participants record their own experiences, not only to cross-reference with my own observations, but also to
include the participants’ voices in the findings. Atkinson & Hammersley (2007) also point out that the inclusion of participant voices aligns with feminist methodologies, stating, “Documentary sources may be drawn on to recuperate the otherwise muted voices of women and other dominated groups” (p. 161).

**Theoretical Framework**

I have employed theoretical triangulation (Denzin, 1970) creating and analyzing data from the perspectives of critical, feminist, and queer theories and pedagogies. Bryman (2003) notes that theoretical triangulation can be viewed as “adding a sense of richness and complexity to an inquiry. As such, [it] becomes a device for enhancing the credibility and persuasiveness of a research account” (p. 3). Triangulating the theories as well as the methods used in this research project helped to ensure the cohesion and reliability of its findings.

**Critical Theory**

It is hard to separate critical theory from critical pedagogy or critical methodology, as they all aim to do the same thing—they strive “to liberate human beings from the circumstances that enslave them” (Horkheimer, 1982, p. 244). Critical theory, which emerged in 1930s, prewar Germany from the neo-Marxist Frankfurt School, has transpired alongside a multitude of social movements. Critical theory and social activism have informed one another throughout history; critical race theory developed alongside the civil rights movement, feminist theory alongside the women’s liberation movement, and queer theory alongside the gay rights movement. As Horkheimer (1982) suggests, critical theories are emancipatory and act not only as means to put into words and explore the root causes of the injustices that everyday people face, but they also
call for action. In fact, critical theories, and thus critical methodologies, themselves promote social justice through enacting praxis (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008).

Critical theories and methodologies align perfectly with the goals of this project, for they bring into question what constitutes as knowledge and who is allowed to produce and disseminate it. Ultimately, they call into question the concept of power. These are important notions for pre-service teachers to explore so they can make informed decisions about both their identities as teachers and the curriculum—explicit and hidden—they choose to employ in their classrooms. Critical theory is central to the realization of social justice, for it is founded on critique of the inequality present in our society and its systems (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008). This critique focuses on the themes of power, privilege, and oppression, all of which must be unpacked in order to truly seek social justice (Adams, Bell, & Griffin, 1997). Due to its alignment with the goals of social justice, critical theory is exemplary for use in this project.

As theories, such as critical theory, feminist theory, and queer theory, began to be combined with educational philosophies, pedagogies were born. While the basic tenets of the theories from which they are derived remain intact, pedagogies apply these theories to the field of education, thus creating educational philosophies on which educators can build their instructional practices. According to Denzin & Lincoln (2008), embracing pedagogy requires teaching “in a way that leads” and is “always ideological and political” (p.7). I have utilized critical pedagogy, feminist pedagogy, and queer pedagogy in this project, as I will explain below.

**Critical pedagogy.** Critical pedagogy is the result of critical theory’s application to the field of education. According to Denzin & Lincoln (2008), “Critical qualitative research embodies the emancipatory, empowering values of critical pedagogy (p. 5).” Further, Kincheloe
& McLaren (2007) purport that it is the goal of critical pedagogy to disrupt and deconstruct the hegemonic cultural production of knowledge in order to create a “more just, democratic and egalitarian society” (p. 285). According to Zajda, Majhanovich, & Rust (2006), these are the same ultimate goals of social justice education.

Freire (1993), who is considered the father of critical pedagogy, states in his seminal work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*,

> Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity or it becomes the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world.

By juxtaposing it with traditional pedagogy, Freire succinctly sums up the goals of critical pedagogy: to aid students in the process of critiquing the world around them in order to work towards transforming the injustices of our current society and its systems. In order to do this, students must be given the tools with which to critique the world around them, which my research project not only aimed to do for its participants, but also to teach them to do for their future students.

**Feminist Theory**

Feminist theory explores and attempts to make meaning of the gendered experiences of women (and men) in our world. Like critical theories and methodologies, “feminist methodologies are overtly political and emancipatory in aim” (Bailey, 2011, p. 393). Feminist theories and methodologies are appropriate for this study given the historical view of teaching as
“women’s work” (Apple, 1988) and the gendered perceptions of teaching. Given that the participants in this study were all cisgendered—a form of gender identity where a person’s assigned gender matches their experienced gender (Crethar & Vargas, 2007)—feminist themes were indeed rampant throughout the project, though, as I discuss in the following chapter, not necessarily apparent to the participants. However, in creating the curriculum for the project, I was sure to include themes that related directly to the female experience in the teaching profession, such as the commonsensical notions of “good” teachers as they relate to ideas of “good” women—kind, loving, and sacrificial—that Britzman (2003) explores and I have mentioned previously.

**Feminist pedagogy.** Combining feminist theory with educational theory, feminist pedagogy embraces six themes, as outlined by Web and Walker (2003): reformation of the relationship between professor and student, empowerment, building community, privileging voice, respecting the diversity of personal experience, and challenging traditional pedagogical notions. My research has promoted these six themes. In the next chapter, I explore the specific ways in which the data reflects an embrace or absence of feminist ideals and how this relates to the commonsensical and conservative teacher identities Britzman (2003), Lortie (1975), and Kumashiro (2009) speak of.

**Queer Theory**

According to Weed (1997), “feminism and queer theory are most easily understood as two branches of the same family tree of knowledge and politics” (p. vi). Critical theory, then, is the root structure of this family tree. All three theories look at normalization, hegemony, and how knowledge is created and disseminated. The lens of queer theory has helped me to analyze
the binaries of student/teacher, good/bad, right/wrong, and a number of other issues presented as dichotomies that arose in the data.

Queer theory is marked by its elusion of a commonly agreed upon definition, which is apropos considering its mission to complicate the ways in which knowledge is constructed and understood. As a product of Gay and Lesbian Studies, queer theory is known for its commitment to disrupt the cultural processes of sexual and gender role normalization, though more recently it has been utilized to explore any of the myriad forms of categorization imposed by society. These processes, which affect the ways in which we construct our identities, are pervasive; they are embedded into every facet of our personal and social lives, including our schools. Normalization functions to restrict the formation and expression of identities which deviate from the status quo, which relates back to Britzman’s (2003) and Kumashiro’s (2009) visions of “good” teachers. Queer theory can be used to “queer” the identities offered to teacher education students on their journeys towards becoming full-fledged teachers.

**Queer pedagogy.** A relatively new discipline, queer pedagogy seeks to uncover and disrupt dichotomous ways in which education socializes both students and teachers. Similar to queer theory, queer pedagogy is often thought to pertain only to gender and sexuality in the classroom, but in fact its influence is much more vast. In particular, I employ queer theory to destabilize the binaries of student/teacher, right/wrong, theory/practice. As noted in the next chapter, these binaries are a major theme of the research findings.

**Participants**

Before the project began, I had pre-identified ten students in the Practicum Program, a dual-major special education and elementary education teacher preparation program at
Southwestern State University, who I anticipated would be interested in joining the learning community. As a graduate assistant for Practicum, I had a great deal of interaction with the students prior to the implementation of the project; based on my perception of their inclination towards criticality and issues of social justice as evidenced in one-on-one conversations, group discussions, and written reflections, I had reason to believe these ten students would be interested in participating in the project. Though I desired a group of no more than fifteen in order to allow space for rich dialogue without the need for a moderator, I decided to offer participation to all twenty-nine Practicum students so as not exclude any students from joining the learning community.

The twelve young women who ultimately ended up participating in the study were all white, middle to upper-middle class, 20-22 year college students. All of the participants were cisgendered—a term which refers to a person who prescribes to their biological gender which was created as a counter to the term transgender (Crethar & Vargas, 2007)—and all but one of the participants identify as heterosexual. As members of the Practicum Program, a dual-major elementary and special education teacher preparation program at Southwestern State University, the pre-service teachers spent between 16-25 hours a week in general and special education classrooms throughout the university town’s elementary, middle, and high schools as well as multiple youth facilities run by the county during this study, which they often refer to during the project. I will specify which population a participant works with when pertinent.

Methods

As previously outlined, I relied on qualitative ethnographic research methods, utilizing participant observation and intersectional reflexive participant journals as my main forms of data
collection. In this section I outline the methods I used to convene the learning community for my project, create the curriculum for each session, and analyze the data collected.

**Convening the Learning Community**

Before convening the learning community, I met with the four supervisors of the Practicum Program, for which I am a graduate assistant, to discuss my intended project and gain approval to recruit the participants of my study from their current cohort. Next, I completed and submitted an application to NAU’s Internal Review Board (IRB), whose approval is required before beginning research involving human or animal subjects. I received approval and exempt status from the IRB (see Appendix A) due to the absence of possibility of harm for the research participants.

After discussion with my committee, I decided not to invite supervisors or professors from the College of Education to join the learning community so as to create a space counter to that they are used to in the university setting (Alejano-Steele, et. al., 2011). Comprising the learning community of strictly students and myself, whom they see as more of a peer than a supervisor due to my age and role in the program, helped to ensure a more horizontal distribution of power amongst the members of the learning community, allowing for greater comfort of the students (Alejano-Steel, et. al., 2011).

After sending out an invitation to participate (see Appendix C) I received only three interested responses. I then approached the supervisory team and requested time during the program’s 8-hour Spring orientation to present my research project proposal to the entire cohort in hopes of arising more interest. All twenty-nine students attended the presentation as well as three of the four supervisors. While the students seemed engaged, no one asked questions or
commented at the end of the presentation. However, fifteen of the twenty-nine students expressed interest in joining the group as a result. I think it is important to note that many of the interested parties added “time permitting” next to their name. This is notable because getting the students to put in the time to be reflexive about their experiences in the learning community and their classrooms proved to be a hurdle as the project commenced. Since the students are in class for eight hours on Mondays and Tuesdays and then their practicum placements for another eight hours on Wednesdays and Thursdays, time was a legitimate concern.

I promptly sent out electronic Doodle polls to those who expressed interest in order to collaboratively decide on the times, dates, and locations the learning committee would convene. This seemed vital to the co-creation process and aligned with feminist methods (Bailey, 2012). Again, as expected, interest dwindled and only seven prospective participants entered their availability into the poll. Of these seven, only three responded to the second poll which aimed to determine the meeting location. Worried about the lack of participation, I again approached the Practicum supervisory team to request their help in eliciting participants.

The team was gracious enough to offer me one hour within their two-hour mandatory reflection time in which the Practicum students are given a structured time and space to reflect on their experiences in their practicum placements. Due to the fact that the reflection would take place at the off-campus location used by the Practicum Program as their headquarters, I decided to use a room next door to the one which is used for reflection. While I wanted to decide on a location collaboratively, circumstances and time restraints prevented this. Description of the site follows in the next section.
Weekly Learning Community Sessions

Ultimately, twelve members of the Practicum cohort committed to participating in the learning community sessions and keep journals of their experiences and observations in their practicum classrooms. Once assembled, the learning community met once a week for an hour at a former middle school in a large, unoccupied classroom which seemed to serve as a storage space next door to the rooms which Practicum uses as their center of operations. Participants and myself sat on the tiered, carpeted floor as the space had only two chairs and one oversized antique desk shoved in a far corner. I was intentional about placing myself in a neutral position at the same level at the students so as to de-stabilize the classroom and create a more horizontal distribution of power (Alejano-Steele, at al., 2012).

Each week, I led the learning community in exploration of curriculum derived chiefly from Adams, Bell, and Griffin’s (1997) *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice*, which was supplemented with curriculum from social justice-oriented nonprofit organizations Rethinking Schools (rethinkingschools.org) and Teaching Tolerance (tolerance.org). I also referred to understandingprejudice.org as a useful tool for finding curriculum to employ in the learning community sessions. While it was my intent to focus chiefly on the theoretical aspect of teaching for social justice, I wanted to ensure that the sessions were interactive so as to further separate the learning community sessions from their university classroom experiences. To this end, I led a different activity each week which encouraged discussion of concepts related to social justice.

After each session, students were given prompts (see Appendices F, J, P, T, V, & W) to guide them in observing in their practicum placements the themes covered in that week’s learning community and reflexively explore in their journals. These journals, along with
participant observation allowed me to utilize methodological triangulation (Denzin, 1970) “in order to enhance confidence in the ensuing findings” (Bryman, 2003, p. 1). I collected and photocopied the participants’ journals each week for ease of analysis, returning the originals to the members as mementos of their participation. The journaling process was an important component of the project not only because it pushes the students to be reflexive during the learning process, but it gives voice to the students, which is a goal of feminist pedagogy (Bailey, 2012). Further, it provided me with a way to cross-reference my own observations and perceptions about the experiences of the learning community.

The journal prompts, which were distributed to the participants in hardcopy and electronically weekly (see Appendices F, J, P, T, V, & W), asked the participants to reflexively respond to questions which related to the specific themes of that week’s session, as outlined above. I directed the participants to:

Remember to be reflexive (reflecting on oneself and the world with a deeper sense of societal implications) during your journaling and observations. Also, keep in mind Freire's idea of education as liberatory in relationship to his quote, “Liberation is a praxis: it is the action and reflection of men and women upon their world in order to change it.”

I highlighted how reflexivity moves beyond mere reflection of one’s experiences and observations and towards examination of their roots and implications in our society and beyond. In the next chapter, I discuss how the participants struggled with reflexivity and tended to journal in a more reflective, microscopic way, failing to connect their experiences or role to a macroscopic larger picture and its societal implications.
The participants wrote an average of one page per week, answering only one of the multiple questions I posed weekly, though one student in particular answered each question individually, writing between one paragraph and one page per question. The percentage of participant journals turned in each week was inconsistent. On average, I received about five journals per week.

**Methods of Analysis**

As noted, I relied on two methods of data collection, videotaping the weekly learning community sessions and collecting the weekly intersectional reflexivity journals (Jones, 2010) the participants and myself kept. The following section outlines my methods of analysis for the data I collected throughout the study.

**Video Analysis Methods**

Before the learning community commenced to meet weekly, I created the *Video Analysis Form* found in (see Appendix D) which helped me organize the data as I collected it. The form included rows to record data for each of the twelve participants, which helped me arrange their individual experiences for ease in tracking their expansion of knowledge of social justice. Each participants’ data was recorded in four separate columns. The first column was entitled *Prior Knowledge/Pre-conceived Notions* to record examples and quotes which reflected data on such concepts as intersectionality, social justice, oppression, privilege, praxis, and "good" teachers, all of which were themes of the learning community curriculum. The second column, *Discourse*, kept track of technical/procedural, ideological, dichotomous/binary, teacher, control, conservative, fear, and activist discourses. The third, *Reactions*, organized participant reactions
of which I anticipated there to be barriers, reluctance, surprise, "Ah-ha," intrigue, and fear. The final column was labeled, *Real-World Examples/Evidence from Placements*, and recorded examples of praxis, social justice, power, privilege, and oppression from the participants’ lives from the past and present. After session three, I added a *Notes/Comments* column to record my own subjective analysis of my findings for each participant.

When the study began, I analyzed the data collected from the video recorded sessions of the learning community each week. Since I was facilitating the sessions and was committed to making them interactive and dialogic, it was extremely difficult for me to do this and take notes in real time. I was sure to complete my analysis of the videotaped session promptly, either right after the session or the next day since I often stayed at the research site late to speak to participants about issues of concern in their own lives and the Practicum Program. I was conscious to analyze the video footage and journals without delay so as not to complicate the current data by blending it with that which would be collected the following week. Further, the previous week’s data informed the curriculum for the next learning community session.

Attendance was consistent due to the fact that the learning community convened during the second hour of a mandatory two-hour weekly meeting time for the cohort. The purpose of this weekly meeting time was to offer the cohort structured time to reflect on their individual placement experiences in a group setting. The decision was made to hold the study during this time after I approached the supervisory team of the Practicum Program about the fact that I was getting few responses to my requests to participate (see Appendix C), with students commenting that they were interested but simply did not have the time.

I tried a few different methods of recording and analyzing the data before realizing which one worked best for the project. Ultimately, I ended up deciding to first transcribe the videos,
then enter the data into the analysis chart according to themes (see Appendix D), before finally adding my own notes and comments. Through trial and error, this method arose as most efficient and balanced, as it effectively combined direct transcription, organization into themes, and a reflexively subjective component.

**Journal Analysis Methods**

I analyzed the participants’ journals slightly differently than I did the videos, initially using the *Journal Analysis Form* (see Appendix E) which I created to organize each participants’ weekly entry under the headings *Answers*, *Notes*, and *Questions/Comments/Feedback*. In the *Notes* section, I recorded how much the participant had written, whether they had turned their journal in on time, and which prompts they responded to. In the *Questions/Comments/Feedback* section I noted my analysis of what they had written as well as the feedback I gave them each week in response to their journal entries. After organizing the journal data into the journal analysis form, I then analyzed the results according to the same four categories as in the video analysis form: *Prior Knowledge/Pre-Conceived Notions, Discourse, Reactions, and Real-World Examples/Evidence from Placements*.

Due to the fact that I relied strongly on qualitative methods of data collection, I acknowledge the fact that while I have backed up my analysis with data, my findings cannot help but be, at least in part, subjectively drawn as they are based on what I observed and deemed important to transcribe as a researcher while reviewing the videotaped sessions of the learning community as well as the participants’ journals. In the next chapter, I report my findings and analysis simultaneously, rather than attempting to separate them.

Another issue I approached in my analysis of the research was discerning the grounded theories that arose through conversation without prompts from myself as the researcher, from
those that I intentionally brought up in our weekly sessions (i.e. reflexivity vs. reflectivity, visions of “good” teachers, and the function of schooling, which I explored in depth in the previous chapter). Due to the fact that I value student voice, and I attempted to create a space in the learning community (as I do in all educational situations) which welcomed and fostered students’ opinions, though I often worried that I dominated the conversation and directed it to a place I wanted it to go. Having the opportunity to actually see myself in the role of educator on the research tape offered me invaluable feedback on my own teaching.

**Limitations**

One of the issues I faced as a participant observer was balancing my role as a facilitator with my role as an observer. As Green (2004) notes,

> It is inherently complicated and dynamic as the participant observer seeks to at once participate as a “member” of a group and critically observe the ways in which the participants perceive, make meaning of, and reproduce the interactions that define the group over time. (p. 148)

It is difficult to play multiple parts at one time; attempting to take notes while facilitating the conversation and activities of the learning community was a cumbersome undertaking. If it were not for the video recordings, much of the data, especially the nuances of inflection of voice or facial expressions, would have been lost due to the taxing role of facilitating.

Another limitation of the study was time. Not only did we only have an hour each week, but the learning community sessions often began late, as they followed Practicum’s reflection time which tended to run over time. Further, the participants took some time to settle from the transition of moving rooms and switching topics. While I was eager to jump into the session’s
activities, it was obvious that the participants needed some time to vent and debrief before delving into the curriculum.

More notably, we only had six weeks in which to explore topics that could have easily taken up an entire semester. In fact, the curriculum from Adams, Bell, & Griffin (1997) is intended for semester-long courses. As I have discussed previously, social justice is often introduced using the add-on approach, which functions to disconnect the concepts explored from their practical application in everyday situations. I will discuss this further in my Conclusion chapter where I make recommendations for the inclusion of social justice in teacher preparation programs.

While researcher bias is often considered a limitation in qualitative research, Sousa (1990) notes that subjective perspectives can be valuable to the research as they often result in a more profound exploration of the data. I am personally committed to social justice education as well as queer, critical, and feminist pedagogies and believe that this position brought me not only a great deal of investment in this research project, but also a great deal of joy in carrying it out. In this case, I consider my bias more of an advantage than a limitation.
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

“Education, therefore, is a process of living and not a preparation for future living.”

-John Dewey

The purpose of this chapter is to present and discuss the findings of the six-week-long research project I conducted in order to explore the questions: What are the experiences of the participants in a learning community devoted to exploring issues of social justice? How does exploration of the intersectionality of identity, power, privilege, and oppression promote social justice? How might teacher preparation programs educate their students to build queer, intersectional, anti-oppressive pedagogies?

Ultimately, the data shows that the participants’ experiences can be grouped into three main themes: binarism, proceduralism, and individualism. These themes appear to act as barriers to promoting social justice through the investigation of intersectionality, power, privilege, and oppression. Based on the results of this study, I have found that teacher preparation programs cannot begin to educate their students towards building queer, intersectional, anti-oppressive pedagogies without first breaking down the barriers to social justice education, which I expound on in Chapter 5.

The themes of binarism, individualism, and proceduralism correlate with those of the critical theories I employed to create and analyze the research project, which I will connect and expound upon throughout this chapter. I entered this research project with the intention of utilizing a number of critical theories that have been applied to the field of education, also known as critical pedagogies, in both the creation of my project and the analysis of the data collected.
The three themes—binarism, individualism, and proceduralism—are intricately connected and often intertwine with one another. As such, the findings and analysis that support each theme do not fit neatly under each heading, which I use for ease of the reader only. Instead, the themes fold back on each other in an elaborate dance as theory and concepts often do. In the following chapter, I provide suggestions for future research on the themes of binarism, proceduralism, and individualism as barriers to social justice education and the creation of learning communities.

As noted in the Methodology chapter, I have chosen to include the participants’ own words based on feminist theory’s insistence on giving voice to those who have historically been denied it, as women, research participants, and teachers systematically have (Denzin, 1970). Participants have been given pseudonyms so as to protect their identities. Their voices are an important part of this research.

**Binarism**

In analyzing the extensive data I collected over the six weeks of my research project, it became apparent that the participants’ responses relied heavily on binary oppositions. As mentioned in the review of the literature on social justice education, binarism is a method of conceptualization which categorizes objects, people, and ideas into dichotomous and opposing groups, such as self/other, male/female, and right/wrong (Derrida, 1967; Foucault, 1969). This section outlines two main forms of binarism which arose from the data: gender role binaries and an “us vs. them” mentality.

**Gender Role Binaries**

The first sub-theme of binarism is gender role binaries, which dichotomize the roles of men and women based solely on their biological sex. Lorber (2011) states that separating people into male and female is both arbitrary and damaging as people either get caught up in fulfilling
or decide to outright reject the false expectations of their prescribed gender. Instead, she offers alternatives to categorizing people which allow them to self-identify as they choose, not according to whether they are masculine or feminine. Johnson (2005) and Butler (1990) argue that gender binaries are politically-charged and culturally-created, not biological, notions that function to enable discrimination and oppression.

“Good” teachers. One of the binary modes of thought apparent in the data was in relationship to gendered visions of “good” teachers. When asked to describe these “good” teachers at our first learning community session, participants offered the following responses (see Appendix I): “passionate,” “beneficial,” “loving,” “compassionate,” “knowledgeable,” “fun,” “engaging,” “smart,” “enthusiastic,” “love[s] kids (of all ages),” “approachable,” “good listener,” “okay with questions,” “humorous,” “has snacks,” “supportive,” “good question ‘askers’,” and “human’ (personable).” Though some of the participants’ responses included traits that exceed those generally attributed to women, such as “knowledgeable,” “smart,” and “engaging,” the majority of the responses fed into the stereotypical notions of “good” women, which are predicated by an internalization of patriarchy on the part of the women who perform them. Britzman (2003) points out,

Many of these stereotypes, commonly associated with women teachers, are profoundly sexist and reveal a disdain for the teaching profession's female roots. In the dominant society, so-called favorable images that characterize the teacher as selfless also mirror the stereotypes associated with women. Like the "good" woman, the "good" teacher is positioned as self-sacrificing, kind, overworked, underpaid, and holding an unlimited reservoir of patience. (Britzman, 2003, pp. 5-6)
While they may not realize it, by accepting these normative feminine roles, these pre-service teachers are feeding into a system of patriarchy which not only limits their own expression of identity, but has larger societal implications for all men and women.

More support for this finding is evidenced by the following quote from Harriet, a participant who struggled throughout the project to rectify her prior knowledge with that which she gained through participation in the learning community. Harriett offered,

But, I feel like though to be a teacher you have to kind of… Maybe not. But I feel like you kinda have to have some of those qualities in you. Because if you're not kind or loving or, like, care about your kids, why would you do it? Even if you have all this scholarly knowledge I feel like you have to have both.

To which Samantha, a participant whose comments generally reflected her criticality, added, "If you have scholarly knowledge, you can teach college." Harriet and Samantha’s comments exemplified a clinging to the sexist binary that teachers, like women, must be loving and nurturing, leaving intelligence to the historically male-dominated field of university-level professorship.

During further discussion of this topic, Samantha commented, “Women do this [teach] because they are nice.” In reviewing the videotape, I hear “good” teachers, whom it has become clear are typically women, described as "motherly" and "nurturing." While the participants did not seem to make these connections before our discussion, they are now beginning to see the connection between teaching and women’s roles. However, they do not necessarily see the societal implications inherent in viewing women and teaching in these ways. In this week’s
journal entry, Celeste questioned these roles, asking “But why? Who decided this? What does that say about where power falls? How does that affect those not in power? Where do I fit in this dynamic?” These questions are important and show the sparks of criticality firing in Celeste’s mind. My journal entry for this week captures Celeste’s personality,

Celeste is an incredibly intelligent and principled woman who stands up for herself and what she believes in. Because of this, she has gotten backlash from Practicum, and, I imagine, from other sources. She is perhaps the most mature and aware student in the Practicum Program, however, she is struggling because she does not fit into the mold of “good” teacher, student, or woman—passive and acquiescing.

**Male and female roles.** Another example of gender binarism was apparent in the discussion of women’s roles in education and society in general is one that continues throughout the six weeks the learning community convened. In attempts of giving recognition to the roles of women in the profession, Kristen asked, rhetorically, "Where would we be in education if we didn't have women in the workplace?" I pointed out that while teachers tend to be women, administrators and pedagogues are more often men, leaving women in the subordinate position of enforcing standards and ideologies rife with misogyny. Apple (1985) points to the gender division in teaching as the reason that there are so many attempts to control what happens in the classroom from the administrative and legislative levels. While women, as teachers, are the primary conduits through which the ideals of the bureaucrats in power are conveyed to the next generation, women simply cannot be trusted to make the decisions as to what this knowledge should be or how it should be passed on.
During a conversation in the subsequent session, participants discussed what they, as women, perceived as an absence of gender oppression because of their visibility as the majority populace in the teaching profession. Celeste added, "And it's weird that teaching wouldn't be a place that we think we're oppressed, but if we were men maybe we would think that." She reflected on her experience with a male mentor, who she described as emasculated due to being one of the only male teachers at this particular elementary school. Despite the fact that the school’s principal was also a man, Celeste seemed to believe that the female teachers were in fact subjugating the males in the workplace. This is an interesting point which links directly to internalized patriarchy—the participant seemed to be projecting onto this male teacher a sense of powerlessness which they perceive as wrong because it is different than the norm. Men are usually in power and women in the subordinate role, which is not generally troubled because it is business as usual, though rife with misogyny.

Celeste then goes on to describe how she knows people who do not want their kids in a male teacher's class, which shifts the discussion to gendered notions of how boys and girls relate to adults of their same sex. Harriet offered, "I think boys respond better to male teachers," to which the other participants nodded in agreement. She continued, "I shouldn’t say this, this is a stereotype, but boys are generally—they have all the behavior problems." Celeste added, "Girls like to be quiet and sit and be polite." There is no elaboration on where these young people learn what is expected of them and thus act in certain ways because of these expectations.

Kate, who worked with older students in a behavior support setting offered,

I can tell you right now, at my placement…the girls will not tell you that they don't want to do something; they'll just sit there, open their book, and not do it. Whereas the guys
will open their book and if you ask, “Are you gonna read it?” they say, “No, I'm not going to read it.” But if their teacher comes over, who is a male and says, “Hey, can you just read this?” he'll say, “Yeah, ok.” It's not even just me, but all the other female figures in the classroom, the boys respond a lot differently to.

I questioned why the young women might behave differently towards a female authority figure than young men might, especially in an educational setting which focuses on behavior correction, but the participants did not seem to follow my line of questioning. Hildie, a participant who struck me as particularly traditional, added, "I think in elementary classes men might be discriminated against, in elementary school, but women more so in secondary and in college." Helen, who was working at the secondary level herself, agrees, "Even when I had female teachers in high school, I felt bad for them. And especially younger women, too…the young men were awful to her. Just like, wouldn't listen, wouldn’t do their work." Hildie commented, "Because she's an attractive young woman," as if this behavior is not only expected but accepted, chalking it off to sexual tension. Harriet offered, "It's because they have raging hormones inside of them," denoting a gendered stereotype that portray young men as sexual savages.

The fact that these pre-service teachers are so caught up in traditional conceptions of gender increases the chances that they will perpetuate these in their current and future classrooms. The previous examples suggest that gender binarism created a barrier to the participants’ exploration of intersectionality, power, privilege, and oppression. In turn, their creation of anti-oppressive pedagogies and practices could not be realized.
“Us vs. Them” Binaries

The theme of us vs. them is a common binary opposition which has distinct consequences. The process of dividing people into opposing categories rather than noting the fluidity and complexity of our own and others' intersectionality creates a barrier to connecting with those who we perceive as different from us. Further, seeing ourselves as stuck in one category or another causes fragmentation which makes it difficult to unify our disparate identities into an equally fluid and complex unified whole.

Othering. Another sub-theme of binarism is exemplified by how the participants often lumped people into categories of privileged and oppressed, not recognizing the complexity of the relationship between power and identity. As self-identified members of the privileged classes of society, the participants in this study often made comments which reflected their lack of understanding of oppressed groups. This lack of understanding often led to overgeneralization and unintentionally racist and classist remarks. For example, during the second session of the learning community, small groups attempted to define prejudice, stereotypes, discrimination, oppression, and social justice (see Appendices L-O). During this discussion, Harriet asked, "So a stereotype is like a generalization?" I tell her it is an overgeneralization, and she responds, "So, if it's a stereotype that the media created… I don't know… Did they create it, or is that like really them? That sounds really bad." She seems embarrassed and Celeste comforts her with, “No, it doesn’t sound bad because it’s true. It came from somewhere. Even if there were multiple examples of people doing something, the media exploit it, and it starts to become common knowledge almost and that creates a stereotype." Though we discussed how stereotypes play into
power and privilege, the participants seemed to have a difficult time taking this seriously and instead resorted to lightly throwing around stereotypes.

While the participants seemed to be attempting to have a more inclusive mindset, cognizant of issues of social justice, their speech and journal entries continued to display othering of people from underprivileged populations. For example, in discussing the negative impacts of prejudice, Hildie claimed, “This prejudice mindset sets up barriers for those people that makes it difficult for them to advance in society, education, their career, etc.” (italics mine). Not only does this othering serve to further separate the privileged from the oppressed, it also denotes a lack of recognition of the ways in which oppression affects the privileged by forcing them to function as the oppressors (Freire, 1993). Further, this distinction between privileged and oppressed corrals people into one category or another without accounting for the intersectionality of their identities, which can place them in both privileged and oppressed groups simultaneously.

**Fragmentation.** An additional sub-theme of binarism that arose from the data was the participants’ tendency to see themselves as separate from and in opposition to others. Despite the fact that their own roles as both students and pre-service teachers are indistinct and mutable, the participants often made comments which reflected binary categorizations between students and teachers, effectively othering whichever group they did not see themselves as a part at that specific moment. It was almost as if they were in the process of constantly switching hats between student and teacher rather than melding their identities into a more cohesive and comfortable one. In some instances, they saw themselves as students, separate from their professors and supervisors, but in others the saw themselves as teachers separate from their students in their practicum placements. Britzman (2003) describes learning to teach as “the
process of becoming.” I explore this theme more in the next section, as it ties closely to the theme of individualism.

**Individualism**

The second major finding of this study was the participants’ reliance on individualism, which I explained in Chapter 2, is a main tenet of neoliberalism which values individual worth over collective (Steger & Roy, 2010). In this study, individualism prevailed in a variety of ways which have manifested in an “us vs. them” or “self vs. other” mentality which leads to separation, competition, and resistance to reflexivity.

**Separation**

The participants often spoke of themselves as teachers separate from their elementary or secondary school students, themselves as college students separate from their supervisors and professors, themselves as members of the Practicum Program separate from members of other programs, and themselves as privileged individuals separate from oppressed groups. Separation relates directly to agency and power. Students are seen as powerless, which, according to the data, this program effectively renders the college students. If these pre-service teachers see themselves as powerless due to their student position, how are they being taught to view their own students?

Often, participants would make comments that exemplified their fear of and distance from the supervisors, such as, Eleanor’s response, directed to the camera “Don't show Lauren (one of the supervisors) this!” followed by, “It's ok, Jaclyn's the only one who is going to see this.” Later, Samantha asks, "So, the other supervisors are not actually going to hear anything we
say on this tape?” I repeatedly assured the participants that I would be the only one viewing the tape and that they would be de-identified if I used any quotes, but they were constantly worried that what they said during the learning community might come back to haunt them. However, their need for a space to vent seemed to outweigh their fear of backlash, for they spent a great deal of time venting about the program and their placements, something they are formally discouraged from doing.

This “us vs. them” mentality of separation can be seen in the following dialogue, which occurred in the very first learning community session. Celeste asks,

Would you say that, um, that after this we would maybe get more of an understanding of how personally we can bring social justice to our own praxis without overstepping certain boundaries that have already been like created for us to not do that. Or, um, is that not… like, do the supervisors know—I don't know how to explain it—do they know where we're headed with this? Not like we're gonna, you know, rise up as a revolution, but, I mean, we just might… Is that maybe what would be, like, the reasoning behind doing this other than like your research and like your interests, but, um, to change that culture within our Practicum?

To which Kate adds, "There's only 5 of them and 10 of us," and throws her first in the air. Samantha adds, "No, there's four of them, we have her" and points to me. My age, which is relatively close to theirs in comparison to the other supervisors, and role as glorified administrative assistant in the program seems to have placed me in the “us” rather than “them” category.
This excitement at the notion of collaborating in a revolt is interesting and brings to mind numerous aspects to ponder. For one, discussion of oppression seems to have led the candidates to feel that they are being oppressed by the program, causing them to separate themselves as students from their supervisors. In fact, Celeste writes in week one, “This 'say-this-but-do-that’ mentality the supervisors teach us through modeling speaks to and promotes a small form of oppression and the traditional model of passive teachers.” Further, their excitement at the thought of revolution shows their desire to not only work together, but to work together in pursuit of a common cause, something that the individualistic push in society and education is attempting to quell.

**Competition**

Individualism also caused the participants to resort to competition, mainly against other teacher preparation programs at Southwestern State University. During the Stand Up If Activity (see Appendix K), I offer the participants an opportunity to pose a question to the group. Samantha asks, "Do you think we have a prejudice in the Practicum cohort about other cohorts?" to which the majority of the participants respond in the affirmative. Kate says, "Because we're better." Kristen comments, “To be totally honest about that though, principals have even told us that when they see we're in Practicum they put us to the top of the list. So that it itself, whether it be negative or positive, that is a prejudice against Practicum versus other programs." Eleanor quips, "We were told that in the informational meeting" that Practicum holds for interested students the semester before they start a new cohort. It seems the elitist view of itself that the program itself strives to uphold has the effect of causing their candidates to not only hold
themselves in higher esteem than members of other programs, but actually devalue their peers. Hildie shares,

My mentor wasn't going to take any more kids. Like, she didn't want any more students like me to come in because she had such a bad experience with three traditional route students last semester. So, I definitely do have prejudice against the others in hearing that they don't dress professionally, they don't act professionally, they have their phones out, they're texting, they're in the back, knees up. There is a higher expectation in Practicum because of the commitment we put in.

Harriet then goes on to tell a story of a friend, who is in a traditional program, struggling to do an assignment she herself could do “in an hour flat.”

**Resistance to Reflexivity**

Another sub-theme which exemplifies individualism is the participants’ resistance to reflexivity. This is a concept we explored in depth at the beginning of the study, as well as throughout its entirety. In the Galley Walk Activity the members of the learning community participated in during the first session, it became apparent that they were previously unaware of the concept of reflexivity or how it differed from reflectivity (see Appendix G)—in fact, some even commented that they did not know what how to be reflective, despite reflection being embedded in the Practicum Program through weekly written and verbal assignments. Participants offered the following definitions for what it means to be reflexive, which exemplify their lack of prior knowledge on the subject: “being flexible?,” “a reaction (naturally?),” “I don’t think I know,” “doing before thinking,” “reactive?,” and “often negative; reaction based on emotion.”
After the Gallery Walk Activity, I discussed the important role of observation in contextualizing the concepts we would cover in the learning community. I explained that reflexive observation helps position them in a place to be able to see the macroscopic rather than simply the microscopic perspective. However, despite repeated reminders, participants failed to make these observations regularly or reflexively discuss the societal implications of what they did observe; participants continued to rely on reflectivity, merely stating their experiences or observations without situating them in a larger socio-political context.

During discussion of this, participants responded that reflexivity was harder than reflectivity because the former because people tend to focus on themselves more without caring how things relate to society. Kate even offered, “We live in a ‘me’ world.” Samantha admitted, “...as humans, we are inherently egocentric.” The examples which leaned more towards reflexivity were missing the important component of action, which Freire (1993) argues is necessary for liberatory praxis.

Not only does reflexivity demand a larger, more inclusive outlook, it has the potential to open our eyes to things we might rather not see. Helen comments, “when we see multiple perspectives, we expose our thoughts to deeper, more difficult (and injust) circumstances.” Agreeing that reflexivity is difficult, Eleanor adds, “You have to look at how your actions might be unknowingly perpetuating biases and stereotypes.” This is not something many people are willing to do, for, oftentimes, ignorance truly is bliss.

Ultimately, individualism posed a barrier to the participants’ exploration of the intersectionality of identity, power, privilege and oppression. In turn, they were unable to
successfully begin building socially just pedagogies and practices. In the next section, I explore the ways in which the third finding, proceduralism, posed similar barriers.

**Proceduralism**

The third theme which arose from the data was the participants’ predilection for proceduralism. This theme is closely linked to the theme of binarism, for it denotes a separation between theory and practice or action and reflection, the main components which, when synthesized, create Freire’s (1993) conception of praxis. As mentioned in the Introduction, Britzman (2003) urges that we trouble the binaries of thought and action, knowing and being, knowledge and experience, the objective and the subjective, theory and practice, the technical and the existential and see them as dialogic rather than dichotomous. In the following section, I explore the ways in which the data shows how proceduralism disconnects practice from theory and functions as a method of policing.

**Disconnected Practice**

Throughout the study, participants repeatedly asked for more specific examples of how to teach or apply social justice in the classroom. While I adamantly reminded them that having a framework of social justice was much more important than doing a few lessons on the topic, the participants could not seem to let go of their attachment to proceduralism. Though the topic arose multiple times during the course of the project, in hindsight I realize that it would have been beneficial to have a discussion specifically about the topic of proceduralism, asking the participants to be reflexive as they think about their own college classrooms as well as their placements. I would like to have collected more information on how procedures shift the focus
from context to content, effectively diminishing the need for teachers to think deeply about why they are doing something and instead focus simply on how to do it.

As mentioned above, I see proceduralism as relating directly to Freire’s (1993) notion of praxis as the cycle of action and reflection. Proceduralism is basically action without reflection. Interestingly enough, in one of our first sessions we explored the definition of praxis, which many of the participants did not seem to fully grasp despite the fact that it is often referred to in the Practicum program (see Appendix H). This, I suspect, may be part of the reason that they rely so much on the action rather than reflection.

While explaining Freire’s (1993) concept of praxis as not only the cycle of theory and practice, but “the action and reflection of men and women upon their world in order to change it” (p. 79) during one of the research project sessions, it comes up in conversation that praxis is a concept that the Practicum Program is trying to encompass, but is falling short. A participant mentions that the program should have more of a focus on theory and not methods, which the other participants nod to in agreement. One participant recommends that if Practicum wanted to be more scholarly, they could connect seminars to theories to show why we know certain methods work and why they are "best practice", referring to a phrase the supervisors or the program use often but without explicitly defining exactly what it means. This concept of “best practice” is questionable, for it is unclear who decides what “best practice” is or what its underlying goals are. Further, there is no connection to theory, which renders the concept unbalanced when comparing it to Freire’s (1993) standards for achieving praxis.

Kathy, a participant who has been exploring issues of social justice and critical pedagogy, including the agency of teachers, outside of the program asks,
Could you almost say that the fact that we're not necessarily doing theories but we're doing more methods, could you consider that a really shallow version of theory? Because you're learning what to do but you're also kind of learning why, like what situations to do it. So, it's just a more shallow or surface version?

This question makes me wonder whether the students understand that theory is more than a simple idea of why a procedure is in place, but instead is able to be applied in multiple situations independent of the specific point being explained. Theory seeks to know and understand why certain concepts are explored or methods are used in the classroom, not simply prescribe practices. From the data collected, it has become apparent that not only do students lack a theoretical background in the field of education, but further they are not even aware what the function of theory is.

Even more concerning was another Hildie’s reaction to our conversation about praxis, “My question about that would be, like what would be the benefit of understanding the theory versus being taught the methods? As far as practicality goes.” This statement epitomizes the barrier that proceduralism promotes. I reply that if teachers do not know why they are teaching something, be it content or ideology, they could be teaching something unintentionally. I bring up the example of having a boys’ line and a girls’ line for students to walk down the hallway, emphasizing that this teaches children that they must prescribe to one specific gender role, which teachers may not realize they are doing.
Policing

Procedures are often used as a means of policing the behavior of students, teachers, and even administrators. As discussed in my review of the literature, Oakes & Lipton (2003) report that new teachers commonly complain about the “procedures and bureaucracies” that get in the way of their teaching and effect students negatively by derailing both the teacher’s and students’ attention from teaching and learning.

An example of the policing of students can be seen in an example Celeste gives of how in her current placement gender is policed through use of ‘boys’ and girls’ hand sanitizers that act as bathroom passes to ensure that only one person of each sex is out at a time. She comments, “Which can like go into like what is your classroom, even unintentionally, representing...Why we do that?” This, again, illuminates the oft-missed connections between why, what, and how, which Paris, Lipson, & Wixson (1983) and Pajares (1992) define as conditional, declarative, and procedural knowledge, as noted in the Literature Review chapter. As with theory and practice, we cannot rely on just one method—we need to find a balance in order to embrace praxis and thus social justice.

The participants often expressed their exhaustion with procedural and bureaucratic issues pushed by the Practicum Program. For example, participants were exasperated during one of the sessions that took place after a lengthy talking-to about email etiquette. Upon entering our room, Kate asks, “Did that really just happen?” Eleanor responds, “How can they even talk to us about responding to emails in a timely manner when they are awful it themselves?”
As discussed in Chapter 2, Kirp (1976) explores the ways in which schools use procedures and bureaucracy to their advantage while not offering the same rights and privileges to their students. This is exemplified in the above example, as well as another issue that took place before the research project began, but arose again after our first session. The following is an excerpt from my researcher journal:

Celeste stayed for almost two hours after our first session to talk to me about what she thought was "a matter of social justice." She had been having issues with Lauren, one of the Practicum supervisors, since last semester. I will not record all of the details here, as they do not pertain to my research, but she ended up being formally reprimanded for making a disrespectful comment to a supervisor. Celeste agreed that her behavior was inappropriate, but resented having to sign a statement which would be put in her file saying she took responsibility for her actions and would not speak to a supervisor in a disrespectful manner again, especially when Lauren was not reprimanded. Celeste approached me because she felt the situation was completely unfair and wanted my opinion on the matter. She now feels like the program is a farce and is having trouble buying into it as she did before the incident.

This is an example of how procedures and bureaucracy benefit those that put them in place by clouding the real issue—that a student felt bullied by a supervisor but had no recourse, despite having approached the program coordinator about the issue prior to her lashing out.
Summary

Overall, the data suggests that the participants were, and continue to be, on a quest to make meaning out of the disconnected knowledge they have gained from their own personal experiences and their preparation to become teachers. Evidence that supports this finding includes their clutching onto proceduralism as a way to avoid the difficult work of deciphering theory, their individualistic lens which prevents them from seeing how they and their work as teachers are intricately connected to society at large, and their binary modes of thought which allow them to simplify and make meaning of a complex world. In the next chapter I offer suggestions for how teacher preparation programs, like Practicum, can combat these limiting points of view in order to embrace social justice within their programs, schools, and society at large.
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

"Education without social action is a one-sided value because it has no true power potential. Social action without education is a weak expression of pure energy."

-Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

In this chapter, I discuss both my conclusions and recommendations that result from the undertaking of this research project. There are four sections to this chapter. The first section reviews the purpose of this study. The second section discusses conclusions I have drawn from the findings of the project as connected to the literature related to learning communities and social justice education. Next, I discuss the implications of the study which tie it to the larger socio-political context in which elementary, secondary, and post-secondary schools are situated. Finally, recommendations are made for encouraging pre-service teachers to build anti-oppressive pedagogies and practices upon foundation of social justice through the use of learning communities.

This project was inspired by my own experiences as an elementary school teacher who, even teaching at Montessori charter schools, struggled to balance my personal commitment to social justice education with the curricular and ideological standards imposed by my administration and dictated by state and federal departments of education. As a result of this project, it has become clear that the findings drawn from the data—binarism, individualism, and proceduralism—which I explored in the previous chapter, indeed acted as barriers to the participants of this study creating socially just pedagogies and practices. I have also begun to trace these barriers back to teacher preparation programs and colleges of education as a whole, many of whom uphold the ideals of bureaucratic state and federal departments of education
through their focus on promoting procedures over pedagogy (Oakes & Lipton, 2003). As explained in the Introduction, Freire (1993) argues that true liberation, which is the goal of social justice education, is not possible without praxis, the synthesis of theory and practice, action and reflection.

Overall, critical theorists and pedagogues believe that social justice education is necessary because of the vast inequities that exist both in our schools and society. Teachers and students, especially those from privileged populations who might see themselves as unaffected by these injustices—as the participants of my study did—must understand the complexities of the ways in which power, privilege, and oppression function to maintain the status quo before they can begin to address issues of social justice. As explained in the Introduction, learning communities, because of their role in disrupting the norms of the classroom—especially those which dichotomize students/teachers, theory/practice, and action/reflection—are prime sites for the exploration of oppression in pursuit of social justice. In fact, the synthesis of these two fields creates a powerful space in which pre-service teachers can work towards transformation.

My research has been successful in filling a gap in the literature on the use of learning communities to promote social justice education through uniting theory and practice in teacher preparation. Mainly, the findings have uncovered three significant barriers that pre-service teachers face to constructing and adopting anti-oppressive pedagogies and practices, which I speak of in the previous chapter and expound upon later in this chapter. I argue that these barriers—binarism, proceduralism, and individualism—must be recognized, troubled, and ultimately dismantled in order for pre-service teachers to be able to create inclusive, socially just pedagogies. I also argue that learning communities, due to their role in queering the classroom, are ideal spaces for this type of work to be done.
Purpose

The purpose of this thesis and the corresponding research project was to document and examine the experiences of the twelve pre-service teachers who voluntarily convened to form a social justice learning community in order to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the experiences of the participants in a learning community devoted to exploring issues of social justice?
2. How does exploration of the intersectionality of identity, power, privilege, and oppression promote social justice?
3. How might teacher preparation programs educate their students to build critically queer, feminist, intersectional, anti-oppressive pedagogies?

The curriculum created for the purposes of the learning community united theory and practice—which Freire (1993) considers praxis—in order to encourage the participants, who are currently enrolled in the Practice Program, a dual-major Elementary and Special Education teacher preparation program at Southwestern University, to create and utilize anti-oppressive pedagogies and classroom practices.

As explained in my Introduction and Methodology sections, my goal throughout the duration of the project was to capture the experiences of the members of the learning community throughout their six-week-long journey of discovering pathways to social justice education. I focused analysis of the data I collected on how the participants’ individual and collective experiences affected them both personally and professionally, utilizing a critical, queer, feminist lens to do so. Ultimately, I was interested in using the learning community as a means to build agency and awareness towards uniting theory and practice as a framework for social justice pedagogy. Further, I believe that pre-service teachers’ understanding of their own and others’
identities and the specific ways in which power, privilege, and oppression intersect are key to their informed development of anti-oppressive educational philosophies and practices—for we cannot build effective socially just pedagogies on weak, uninformed foundations.

**Conclusions**

In the following section, I discuss conclusions I have drawn from the project’s findings and my analysis of them, relating these findings directly to the research questions stated above. First, I discuss my conclusions regarding how the three principal findings of this study—binarism, individualism, and proceduralism—each posed barriers to the second and third research questions, which deal with the participants’ creation of socially just pedagogies and practices. Next, I discuss my conclusions about how learning communities dedicated to investigating the intersectionality of identity, power, privilege, and oppression can help teacher preparation programs to educate their students to build critically queer, feminist, intersectional, anti-oppressive pedagogies.

**The Findings as Barriers to Pre-Service Teachers Building Socially Just Pedagogies and Practices**

As I reported in Chapter 4, the data shows that the participants in this study experienced the social justice curriculum of the learning community through the lenses of binarism, proceduralism, and individualism. The first conclusion I have made as a result of this study is that the participants’ experiences and replications of these three findings posed multiple barriers to their exploration of power, privilege, and oppression in pursuit of creating socially just pedagogies and practices. In the following sections I explain how each finding functioned as an impediment to social justice education.
**Binarism as a barrier.** As a result of the data, I conclude that the binarism the participants experienced during the study resulted in a number of barriers to their adoption of anti-oppressive pedagogies and practices. In Chapter 4, I outline how the participants relied on gender role and “us vs. them” binaries, causing them to dichotomize the concepts of male/female and privileged/oppressed, seeing them as distinct and separate groups which govern individuals based on their membership. This resulted in the participants’ othering those who belonged to groups besides those they themselves did, as well as fragmentation of their own teacher and student identities. Each of these findings prevented the participants from truly embracing social justice education, as outlined below.

*Gender role binaries.* One binary mode of thought the participants were entwined in according to the data was that of gender—specifically male/female—and the roles related to each. As noted in Chapter 4, the participants seemed to believe that elementary school teachers are predominantly women because they need to be kind, nurturing, and motherly—dispositions which males lack. Further, the data notes a belief on the participants’ part that boys relate better to men and girls to women due to their shared gender. These dualistic beliefs of gender roles foster the discrimination of those who do not fit neatly into their prescribed gender (Johnson, 2005; Butler, 1990). Further, as Britzman (2003) points out, commonsensical beliefs about men’s and women’s roles not only limit the teacher identities these pre-service teachers can create for themselves, but they also limit the acceptable identities their students can adopt. In order to promote social justice, all identities must be recognized and accepted, not simply those who fit the norm (Adams, Bell, & Griffin, 1997). It is thus necessary for pre-service teachers committed to social justice to queer the concept of identity, allowing themselves, their students, and their peers to express their gender or lack thereof freely.
“Us vs. them” binary. According to the data, participants viewed themselves as privileged and thus fundamentally different from members of oppressed groups, which include many of their former, current, and future students. Subsequently, the participants adopted an “us vs. them” mentality, which functioned to separate them from rather than unite them with others, which is necessary for the pursuit of social justice. As mentioned in the review of the literature on social justice education, Goodman (2011) purports that categorizing people into dominant and subordinated groups both reflects and promotes binary modes of thinking which leads to individualistic self-interest that obstructs social justice, rather than mutual or interdependent self-interest that promotes it.

A binary mindset inevitably makes it difficult for people to progress through the stages of intellectual development outlined by Perry (1970) and Belenky, et al. (1986). The data suggests that the participants of this study were stuck in the first stage, Dualism/Received Knowledge, which is characterized by dichotomous thinking. In order for them to be able to progress to the final stage, Commitment in Relativism/Constructed Knowledge, which truly supports social justice, the participants need to be able to expand their views of themselves and others and construct their own worldview. I believe further participation in the learning community would have helped them to get to this point, which I will explore later in this chapter.

Further, by seeing themselves as privileged pre-service teachers working with oppressed students, the participants run the risk of putting themselves in the role of savior rather than that of co-conspirator in the quest for social justice. As mentioned in the review of the literature, Adams, Bell, and Griffin (1997) purport that social justice education thrives on agency. By viewing students who are members of oppressed groups as targets who lack agency, these pre-service teachers, despite their good intentions, are simply perpetuating business as usual. They
must be taught to trouble the idea of fixed group membership and recognize the ways in which identity is intersectional. Further, they must learn to recognize their own privilege and become part of the change rather than blindly reaping the advantages of their unearned privilege.

Additionally, the participants’ adherence to the teacher/student binary widens the gap they perceive between themselves and their students, as well as themselves and their own professors and supervisors in the Practicum Program. It also causes them to fragment their own identities between their roles of teachers in some instances and students in others. These traditional views of teachers’ and students’ roles pose barriers to the democratic function of social justice education (Cushner, McClelland, & Safford, 1996). In order to work towards social justice, these pre-service teachers must learn to break down the teacher/student dichotomy in order to build a more egalitarian space which fulfills the needs of all parties.

**Individualism as a barrier.** I have also concluded, as a result of this study, that individualism also acted as an impediment to the participants’ creation of anti-oppressive pedagogies and practices. The data shows that individualism, like binarism, caused the participants to separate themselves from other due to their membership in certain groups, such as privileged/oppressed or student/teacher. Further, individualism fostered competition between the participants as members of the Practicum Program and members of other teacher preparation programs at Southwestern State University. Finally, individualism resulted in a resistance to reflexivity. These findings all impeded the pursuit of social justice education throughout the study.

**Separation.** The data shows that, like binarism, individualism promoted the participants’ separation of people into self-reliant entities who are members of distinct and opposing groups (i.e. self/other, us/them, privileged/oppressed). Lortie (1975) was specifically concerned with the
ways in which teachers perform in isolation, rarely collaborating or dialoguing with one another about their pedagogies and practices. This separation promotes the neoliberal ideals of competition and independence (Steger & Roy, 2010) which obstruct democracy, a core tenet of social justice education (Cushner, McClelland, & Safford, 1996).

Goodman (2011) notes that individualism leads to an individualistic analysis of oppression, which eludes the societal inequalities that link oppression to a larger system of domination rather than simply individual injustices. In this way, individualism impedes social justice, for it blames individuals for inequity rather than the larger, socio-political system. Further, individualism plays into the myth of meritocracy, which leads people to believe that hard work and perseverance can overcome any obstacle (Oakes & Lipton, 2003; Adams, Bell, & Griffin, 1997). According to many social justice pedagogues, it is vital that we begin the pursuit of social justice with an understanding of the pervasiveness of oppression (Adams, Bell, & Griffin, 1997; Hardiman & Jackson, 2007; Kumashiro, 2004).

*Competition.* Individualism also leads to competition, as evidenced by the findings of the study, which functions to divide rather than unite people. Participants, as members of the Practicum Program, developed a view of themselves as better than members of other programs. This competition was encouraged by supervisors of the program as well as teachers who act as mentors to the pre-service teachers who, according to the participants, consistently told the participants that they were the best teacher preparation program at SSU. Oakes & Lipton (2003) link competition to industrial-era education which functioned to weed out weaker individuals and thrived on the concept of meritocracy, which suggests that everyone can succeed if they simply put their minds to it. Competition restricts social justice education, which is emancipatory in aim (Freire, 1993), and the participants’ creation of anti-oppressive pedagogies.
Resistance to reflexivity. The participants’ resistance to reflexivity led to an inability to connect their experiences to the larger socio-political context, according to the findings. The participants tended to be more reflective in their journals and discussions, noting the difficulty of reflexivity. According to Frye (1983), we tend to see oppression microscopically, as individual wires in a birdcage, rather than macroscopically, as the restrictive, interlocking structure that it is. Social justice advocates maintain that it is vital that we move away from individualistic theories of oppression and recognize its place in a pervasive, overarching system of domination (Adams, Bell, & Griffin, 1997; Goodman, 2011; Hardiman & Jackson, 1997). By resisting reflexivity, the participants are failing to make the connections between the injustices they observe and their systemic causes, impeding their adoption of social justice pedagogies and practices.

Proceduralism as a barrier. An additional conclusion I have made is that the proceduralism the participants experienced throughout the study posed an obstacle to their creation of anti-oppressive teaching philosophies and methods. According to my findings, proceduralism both policed their behaviors of the participants and their students and led these pre-service teachers to rely on classroom practices disconnected from theory. Both of these findings resulted in barriers to the participants’ building of social justice pedagogies.

Disconnected practice. Freire (1993) argues against “losing oneself in the disconnectedness of practice” (p. 382), which is precisely what the data shows the participants of this study to have done. Harste, et al. (2004) have found that teacher’s understanding praxis, or the marriage of theory and practice (Freire, 1993), helps them to determine their professional identities and impacts whether they create curriculum which promotes agency or complacency. As a result of the Practicum Program’s reliance on procedures, which Oakes & Lipton (2003)
note is the norm is teacher preparation, the participants showed a lack of theoretical knowledge about pedagogy as well as resistance to gaining it. Instead of learning about the theoretical framework of social justice education, they wanted to gain concrete methods of employing it without truly even understanding what necessitates it. Freire (1993) believes that the melding of theory and practice is necessary in social justice education, which he refers to a liberatory education.

Proceduralism, like individualism, was a direct aim of education during the industrial era, for it effectively limited the ability of both teachers and students—who were in training to become pawns in the workforce (Cushner, McClelland, and Safford, 1996)—to be dialogic and critical, which are basic requirements of social justice education (Freire, 1993). If the teachers and students are unable to even question the practices they are entwined in, social justice is obstructed. Further, Adams, Bell, and Griffin (1997) note that social justice must be predicated by an understanding of theories of oppression, for we cannot work towards the solution if we do not truly understand the problem.

**Policing.** Policing poses a barrier to social justice, which is emancipatory in aim (Freire, 1993), for policing functions to perpetuate the restrictive and oppressive status quo. Participants in this study often commented on the policing procedures of the Practicum Program, which dictated how they dressed, responded to emails, and maintained “professional dispositions.” Kirp (1976) has written specifically about the ways in which procedures are used in educational institutions to the advantage of administrators, often refusing the same rights and privileges to their students. Further, Apple (1985) links administrative and legislative attempts to control the daily procedures of the classroom to a systemic mistrust of women, who continue to make up the
majority population of schoolteachers. Freire (1993) believes education should be the practice of freedom, which policing disrupts, thus negating social justice.

Using Learning Communities in Teacher Preparation to Break Down the Barriers to Building Socially Just Pedagogies and Practices

While the literature shows that learning communities are commonly convened for depoliticized purposes in educational settings—such as increasing student enrollment, raising grades, and improving self-esteem—I argue that learning communities have the potential to be transformative if they commit themselves to social justice. Indeed, Hill (1985) states that learning communities do not propose to solve simply one problem in higher education, but a whole host of complex issues our educational institutions face. To this list I would add the binarism, individualism, and proceduralism experienced by the participants of this study, which, according to the literature, is experienced by many students in teacher preparation programs and other programs of study alike.

As a result of the implementation and analysis of this study, I have come to the conclusion that participation in a social justice learning community helped the pre-service teachers who were members to begin to dismantle the barriers they faced in creating their own anti-oppressive pedagogies and practices. While the findings show that they experienced the learning community curriculum through the lenses of binarism, individualism, and proceduralism—all of which I conclude pose barriers to social justice education—I believe the participants could have been more successful in breaking down these barriers had they been able to continue their work in the learning community, exploring together curriculum that more specifically promotes the dismantling of binarism, individualism, and proceduralism. There is a gap in the literature on the synthesis of social justice education and learning communities in
teacher preparation, which my study intended to fill. The literature suggests that queer, critical, and feminist theories as well as collaborative learning communities work to dismantle binarism, individualism, and proceduralism. In the following sections I discuss my recommendations for using social justice learning communities to help pre-service teachers build anti-oppressive pedagogies and practices, effectively bridging the two bodies of literature.

**Breaking down binarism.** According to the literature, learning communities strive to break down the student/teacher binary (Alejano-Steele, et. al. 2011; Cushner, McClelland, & Safford, 1996), as do queer theory (Jagose, 1996), feminist theory (Weed, 1997), and critical theory (Derrida, 1981)—all of which promote social justice education (Adams, Bell, & Griffin, 1997). Dialogue, which learning communities thrive on (Alejano-Steel, et al., 2011), is vital in the exploration of anti-oppressive pedagogies and practices (Adams, Bell, & Griffin, 1997). My goal in undertaking this project was to co-create a space with the members of the learning community where critical dialogue around the dichotomies of theory/practice, teacher/student, and male/female could take place. While the participants continued to struggle with these binary modes of thought, I believe the space we created within the learning community fostered dialogue around the disruption of binarism which would have been more successful in blurring the lines between these tensions over time. The curriculum we explored in the learning community focused on providing the participants with a clear understanding of the problems of power, privilege, and oppression in schools and society; I believe with more specific focus on queer, feminist, and critical theories binarism, individualism, and proceduralism could have been more effectively disrupted.

**Breaking down individualism.** Breaking down the individualism students and faculty experience is one of the chief aims of implementing learning communities in educational settings
Learning communities not only promote, but thrive on the collaboration of their members (Alejano-Steele, et al., 2011; Dinsmore & Wenger, 2006; Hord, 1997). Lortie (1975) maintained that systemic change of our educational structure was needed and proposed teachers work collaboratively to transform their practices through membership in professional learning communities. By working together, as the participants of this study did, pre-service and in-service teachers can trouble the commonsensical views of “good” teachers and teaching that Britzman (2003) and Kumashiro (2009) outlined and begin to form their own identities rather than prescribing to those that have been presented to them.

Learning communities affirm community, democracy, and sociality, which counteract the individualistic goals of self-reliance and isolation (Cushner, McClelland, & Safford, 1996; Lenning & Ebbers, 1999; Nieto, 1996). In a learning community, each person is valued—not for their individual worth—but for the collective worth of the community (Cushner, McClelland, & Safford, 1996). To achieve social justice, people must transcend individualistic self-interest, which benefits only individuals, and act in ways that support interdependent self-interest, which benefits everyone, blurring the lines between “me” and “you” (Goodman, 2011). Learning communities, because of their focus on community, discourage the isolation Lortie (1975) was concerned with (Dinsmore & Wegner, 2006).

**Breaking down proceduralism.** According to Alejano-Steele, et al. (2011), learning communities promote a “radical departure” from traditional styles of education by queering the notion of the classroom and learning in powerful ways. They insist on critical dialogue between both students and faculty, which Freire (1993) and Adams, Bell, & Griffin (1997) note are prerequisites to social justice education, but are often quelled in educational settings by a proceduralist mentality that pushes teachers to focus on the *how* instead of the *why* (Cushner,
McClelland, & Safford, 1996; Pajares, 1992; Paris, Lipson, and Wixson, 1983). When members of learning communities, whether professional or educational, are encouraged to dialogue critically, as Alejano-Steele, et al. (2011) suggest, they can begin to see through and break out of the proceduralism that impedes them from adopting socially just practices and pedagogies.

**Implications**

Traditional institutions of public education—be they elementary, secondary, or post-secondary—perpetuate binarism, proceduralism, and individualism—whether formally or informally, consciously or unconsciously—in order to maintain business as usual. This is a problem on many fronts; not only do these lenses pose barriers to social justice education, as I outlined in the above section, but, as explained in Chapter 1, they also continue to be maintained by teacher preparation programs who perpetuate “the oppressive status quo” (Kumashiro, 2009). Therefore, teacher preparation programs, such as the Practicum Program, which intend to commit themselves to social justice education and effectively disrupt the existing state of affairs must make the changes not only in the content of their curriculum, but in their educational philosophy and modes of instruction as well. I talk more about what these changes might look like in the Recommendations section of this chapter.

**Binarism.** Binaries—be they of gender (male/female), sexual orientation (gay/straight), race (black/white), ethics (right/wrong), or methodology (theory/practice)—are limiting. They do not take into account the complexity of our personal and social identities or our equally as complicated human actions and interactions, thoughts, feelings, and ways of being in the world. To reduce ourselves and the world around us to binaries is to denote that there are only two ways of being, effectively othering any identity, thought, action, or way of being that does not fit neatly into one category or another. While categorizations may have been created to help us to
make sense of a complex world, they function to limit the ways in which we think, act, and are. Rather than passing these on to our students—be they elementary, secondary, or post-secondary—critical pedagogues argue we should be working to trouble how knowledge is created and disseminated, who we conceptualize ourselves and others to be, what normative roles we perform and embody, and why these processes are restricted in schools in the first place.

The examples of binary modes of thought that arose from the data call into question teacher preparation programs’ and universities’ roles in breaking down these narrow points of view. As institutions of higher learning, universities have a commitment to expanding the knowledge of their students and pushing them to become critical thinkers. Teacher preparation programs in particular should have similar goals if they intend to promote criticality, for they are not only educating future educators, but they are educating them about education. Failing to include theoretical perspectives of education does a vast disservice to these future educators, for not only does it disconnect their practice from the pedagogical framework in which it should be founded, but it functions to keep teaching from being respected as a scholarly, academic profession.

**Individualism.** Not unlike binarism, individualism functions to separate individuals and promote competition, two processes which enable neoliberalism (Steger & Roy, 2010). While our teachers may tell us from a young age to “work together” and “get along,” they—as slaves to the state—act to promote individualism by grouping students into grade levels, assigning seats to restrict movement, allotting grades (often subjectively), teaching to and proctoring standardized tests, and among other actions which promote competition between students and create binaries of self vs. other and us vs. them. Quite simply, our actions speak louder than our words. If we were to truly promote collaboration and bridge relationships between students across differences,
we would practice what we preach—we would allow students to work together in meaningful ways that allow them to explore and strengthen their social interconnectedness and embrace their differences.

As evidenced by the participants in the learning community, institutions of higher learning, including Colleges of Education and the teacher preparation programs within them, practice the same individualizing processes as elementary and secondary schools. College students are separated by class, major, and distinction. They compete academically for grades and attention from their professors. If prospective teachers continue to be educated in environments which perpetuate individualism, they will continue to promote individualism in their own classrooms. We must model collaboration for our future teachers (and all of society), setting up experiences that will allow them to learn firsthand what it is like to work towards the common good rather than focusing solely on themselves.

**Proceduralism.** Proceduralism functions to distract us from what is truly important. Procedures tend to impede democracy, though they often intend to ensure it (Kirp, 1976). According to the data, the participants were inundated with procedures from the Practicum Program. They had to sign countless documents which outlined everything from their dress to how they were expected to respond to emails. The participants often spoke of the tediousness of these procedures, as well as the “do as I say, not as I do” mentality of their supervisors. To them, a conflict existed as procedures were put in place to regulate their actions, but not those of their supervisors.

In this study, proceduralism was also found to act as a crutch on which the participants leaned in order to avoid doing the difficult work of exploring theories of social justice, power, privilege, and oppression. Procedures enabled these pre-service teachers to focus on specific
methods of anti-oppressive education rather than delving into the myriad reasons behind enacting these practices, which would in turn force them to recognize and take responsibility for their own privilege and how this ultimately makes them implicit in the system of domination.

Summary

Binarism, individualism, and proceduralism all function to protect business as usual—which thrives on power, privilege, and oppression—by limiting the actions and identity development of not only students and teachers, but all citizens. In order to disrupt these processes of limitation, education—be it elementary, secondary, or post-secondary—must be committed to socially just, anti-oppressive pedagogies and practices. In the following section I make recommendations for how teacher preparation programs and social justice learning communities can do help future teachers to trouble education in effective ways.

Recommendations

In the following section I share my recommendations for both teacher preparation programs and social justice learning communities to aid pre-service teachers in their quest to overcome the commonsensical views of teaching (Britzman, 2003 and Kumashiro, 2009) they are presented with. As noted in the Introduction, these visions of “good” teachers rarely promote the adoption of socially just teaching practices and pedagogies by pre-service teachers, but instead function to perpetuate oppression in our schools and society (Kumashiro, 2009).

Teacher Preparation Programs

This study has brought to light a number of issues within the Practicum Program at Southwestern State University that I suggest be addressed. First, since the data suggests that longevity and the synthesis of theory and practice are necessary to support the participants’ creation of anti-oppressive pedagogies and practices, social justice needs to become the
foundation of the program and not simply an add-on if Practicum is to truly embrace social justice education. I would suggest beginning with a re-visioning of the program’s mission statement and goals. The curriculum for each of the required courses would then need to be modified to embrace content and methods that reflect the new social justice mission of the program. Not only would each course need to make explicit references to how content relates to issues of social justice, but the instructional methods would need to promote collaboration, break down the student/teacher binary, and deeply connect theory to practice. Practicum assignments would need to be modified to include attention to anti-oppressive subject matter and practices in lesson planning, weekly written reflections, and weekly reflection discussions. These written and verbal reflections would also need to become reflexive, shifting focus from the microscopic to macroscopic and being cognizant of the wider societal implications of our personal experiences. Further, the entire structure of the Practicum Program would need to rest upon a socially just foundation of democracy, agency, and equity where all members feel safe and supported.

Social Justice Learning Communities

My first recommendation for future studies on the convening of learning communities in three semester teacher preparation programs in order to explore issues of social justice would be to convene the learning community for a longer period of time. Complex concepts such as power, privilege, oppression, and others explored in learning communities committed to social justice need much more attention than half a semester can offer. I would also suggest the use of Adams, Blumenfeld, Castaneda, Hackman, Peters, & Zuniga’s (2013) Readings for Diversity and Social Justice, which was written as a theoretical companion to Adams, Bell, & Griffin’s (1997, 2007) Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice. This would provide the members of the learning
community the opportunity to explore the theoretical frameworks of social justice education and the issues related to anti-oppression, which my learning community lacked.

While the fact that membership in learning communities is voluntary helps to increase the buy-in of its members, it is important that the learning community have programmatic and/or institutional support (Lenning & Ebbers, 1999). Offering incentive, such as the professional development hours offered to the participants of my study, is effective when working with students who have so much on their plate that they cannot conceive of adding another commitment no matter how interested they may be.

Though a learning community comprised solely of students has its benefits, namely the creation of a nonhierarchal space where fear of being vulnerable or sounding uninformed are quelled, I would suggest research around convening learning communities of both students and faculty committed to exploring issues of social justice. I suspect there would be numerous barriers to overcome, but feel this could be a powerful tool for deconstructing the classroom and power dynamics between students and professors. Further, there is a lack of literature on this topic which this research could fill.

Call to Action

Students and teachers alike deserve the right to realize their full potential without the restrictions imposed by the state and society. Learning communities devoted to social justice have the power to influence more than just the institutions in which they are convened, as long as they are committed to praxis—theory and practice, action and reflection (Freire, 1993). Theorizing about ways to make change have no effect on the world if they are not carried out by thoughtful action which proposes to actually make the changes needed. Similarly, action ungrounded in the theories that explore the root of the problems and reflections that assess the

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benefit of the action are insufficient. We must unite our minds and bodies in pursuit of anti-oppressive social change.

As an activist-educator, I am not only committed to social justice, but also to the belief that schools, as the prime sites of indoctrination of our young citizens into the existing state of affairs, are precisely the sites where change needs to be catalyzed. We underestimate the power and commitment of our teachers and the youth whom they educate and support. If we intend to build the future we envision for our children—one that is premised on concepts worth sustaining such as equity and justice—we must work towards anti-oppressive social change. It is not enough to simply hope, we must believe, and, above all else, be the change.
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APPENDICES

Appendix A

IRB Approval Letter

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS IN RESEARCH
Northern Arizona University
PO Box 4087
Flagstaff, AZ 86011-4087

To: Jaclyn Pace, BA
From: Donna Goldberg
Approval Date: January 16, 2014

Project: Making Social Justice a Part of Your Praxis
Project Number: 550907-1
Review Category/ies: 2) Survey procedures

Your research protocol has been approved by the Human Subjects Committee/Institutional Review Board (IRB) at NAU under the category of EXEMPT. This category means that your IRB approval for this project does not have an expiration date, so periodic renewal of approval is not necessary unless there are changes in your project that affect the status.

If your project changes in any way, you must file a Research Amendment form available at https://www.research.nau.edu/compliance/irb/forms.aspx PRIOR TO implementing any changes. You may not implement the changes until you have written approval for the change from the IRB, unless the change is necessary to eliminate immediate hazards to participants. Failure to do so will result in noncompliance and possible suspension or termination of your research project.

Any unanticipated problems or unexpected adverse events must be reported to the IRB within 5 business days (within 24 hours for serious adverse events) of your becoming aware of the event by filling out an Adverse Reaction or Event Reporting form (also available at website above).

As you conduct your research, please remember that:
1. Participants are volunteers or are involved in regular educational programs; they are free to withdraw from the research at any time without penalty.

2. Unless you are using existing data, Participants must be informed of the research project through written or oral explanation and must sign or approve electronically or verbally an informed consent form (for minors and children the parent or guardian must sign).

3. Unless the participants agreed to an alternative arrangement, the participants' anonymity and confidentiality must be protected. They should not be able to be identified through the responses. The presentation of the data should not put them at risk of any negative consequences. Access to the data is specified and restricted by the researcher and the department.

Additional IRB information may be found at https://www.research.nau.edu/compliance/irb/index.aspx.
Appendix B

Human Subject Informed Consent Form

Project Title: MAKING SOCIAL JUSTICE A PART OF YOUR PRAXIS

Dear Participant:
You are being asked to participate in a project conducted through MASTER OF ARTS IN SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES at Northern Arizona University by JACLYN PACE that involves research. The researcher is required to receive your informed consent before you participate in this project.

JACLYN PACE will explain to you in detail: (1) the purpose of the project; (2) what you will be asked to do and how long your participation will last; (3) how your personal information, if collected, will be kept confidential; (4) if you will receive any compensation; (5) the benefits; and (6) potential risks of participation.

Your participation in research is voluntary. If you choose not to participate, there are no penalties or loss of benefits or services that you are otherwise entitled. If you decide to participate and then withdraw or skip a question there are also no penalties or loss of benefits or services. Whether or not you choose to participate in this project will have no effect on your relationship with NAU now or in the future.

A basic explanation of the project is written below. Please read this explanation and discuss it with the JACLYN PACE. Feel free to ask questions to help you understand the project. After any questions you may have are answered and you decide to participate in the research, please sign on the last page of this form in the presence of the person who explained the project to you. A copy of this form will be given to you to keep.

1. PROJECT PURPOSE:
The purpose of this research project is to document and examine the experiences of the pre-service teachers who will convene to form a learning community entitled Making Social Justice a Part of Your Praxis. The learning community will meet weekly to explore the intersectionality of identity as well as power, privilege, and oppression, reflecting on their practicum experiences in order to promote social justice in their current and future K-12 school and classroom settings. Throughout the 6-weeks that the learning community convenes, I intend to document the experiences of its members, focusing specifically on how these individual and collective experiences affect them both personally and professionally, especially in terms of the development of their own pedagogies as future teachers.

2. EXPLANATION OF PROCEDURES:
The learning community will meet on-campus (time and location to be determined collectively), once a week, for 6 weeks, in one to two hour sessions, over Spring semester 2014 that will explore curriculum derived chiefly from Adams, Bell, and Griffin’s (2007) Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice and Teaching Tolerance, a non-profit organization dedicated to social justice. Each week, the researcher will lead a different activity to encourage discussion of intersectionality, power, privilege, oppression, and isms (i.e. racism, classism, sexism) in which members of the learning community will be asked to
participate. Participants will also be asked to keep a reflexive journal in which they will record and reflect upon their learning community and practicum classroom experiences, focusing on the ways in which these impact their teaching practices and pedagogies. Journals will be turned in upon completion of the learning community and returned to participants once they have been analyzed by the researcher. All learning community sessions will be videotaped and analyzed by the researcher and the tapes destroyed upon completion of the analysis. Participants may also be asked to take part in surveys and/or interviews during the course of the learning community.

3. CONFIDENTIALITY:
The researcher will keep all data (journals and videotapes) in a private residence and allow no one access to the data other than the researcher. The researcher will de-identify subjects through pseudonyms in the final written analysis of the project. The researcher will preserve the data collected while analyzing it for use in completion of a master’s thesis and destroy it upon acceptance of the thesis by the researcher’s committee.

4. COMPENSATION:
Participants will receive professional development credit for the total number of hours convened (approximately 10-15 hours, depending on the length of the weekly meetings). The researcher will also supply snacks and drinks for each of our meetings.

5. BENEFITS:
A chief aim of the learning community will be to build agency and awareness in participants towards uniting theory and practice for social justice pedagogy. My argument for undertaking this project centers on the belief that pre-service teachers’ understanding of their own and others’ identities and the specific ways in which power, privilege, and oppression intersect are key to their informed development of socially just pedagogies and practices. This project aims to benefit not only the participants, but their current and future students as well; socially just pedagogies thrive on democracy, equity, and egalitarianism, all of which students benefit greatly from.

6. RISKS:
I do not foresee the possibility of any risks of participation in the research as outlined in the application.

7. CONSENT:
I have read the above information about MAKING SOCIAL JUSTICE A PART OF YOUR PRAXIS and have been given an opportunity to ask questions. I agree to participate in this project, and I have been given a copy of this consent document.
I agree to be video recorded for this research. ___YES ___NO

_________________________________________ Date ______________
Signature of Participant

_________________________________________ Date ______________
Printed Name of Participant

_________________________________________ Date ______________
Signature of Research Representative

_________________________________________ Date ______________
Printed Name of Research Representative

The dated approval stamp in the header of this consent form indicates that this project has been reviewed and approved by the Northern Arizona University Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research. Contact the Human Research Protections Office at 928-523-4236 if you have any questions about: (1) the conduct of the project, or (2) your rights as a research participant, or (3) a research-related injury. Any other questions about the research project should be directed to:

JACLYN PACE
MASTER OF ARTS IN SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES
(928)274-7724/JP949@NAU.EDU

JEAN ANN FOLEY (FACULTY SPONSOR)
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION, DEPARTMENT OF TEACHING AND LEARNING
(928)523-6998/JEANANN.FOLEY@NAU.EDU
Appendix C

Invitation to Participate in Research Project

Dear Colleagues,

I am writing to invite you to participate in a research project I will be conducting this coming semester in order to collect data to include in my thesis. The project is to convene a learning community entitled, *Making Social Justice Part of Your Praxis*. Participation is voluntary and will include meeting once a week (time and day to be decided collaboratively by participants) for 6 weeks beginning the first or second week of the Spring 2014 semester. Meetings will last from 1-2 hours and will include discussions and interactive activities exploring the following topics:

- Week One: What is Praxis, Anyway?, Visions of “Good Teachers,” Teachers as Researchers
- Week Two: Intro to Social Justice, Understanding Prejudice
- Week Three: Intersectionality of Identity, Power, Privilege, and Oppression
- Week Four: Isms—Racism, Classism, Ableism
- Week Five: Isms—Sexism and Heterosexism
- Week Six: Developing Socially Just, Anti-Oppressive Pedagogies and Practices

There will be no outside readings or related work required of you, though I will ask you to reflect on your experiences in the learning community and your practicum placements. I will provide snacks and drinks for our meetings and you will receive professional development credit for the hours the learning community meets (approximately 6-12 hours).

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me by phone or email. I am excited about undertaking this project and hope you will join me!

Sincerely,

Jaclyn Pace

(928)274-7724
## Appendix D

### Video Analysis Form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Prior Knowledge/Pre-conceived Notions</th>
<th>Discourse</th>
<th>Reactions</th>
<th>Real World Examples/Evidence from Placements</th>
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<td>(barriers, reluctance, surprise / &quot;Ah-ha&quot;, intrigue)</td>
<td>(praxis, social justice, etc.)</td>
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Appendix E

Journal Analysis Form

Q1:

Q2:

Q3:

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Reflectivity vs. Reflexivity

Reflectivity

- the capacity of humans to exercise introspection and the willingness to learn more about their fundamental nature, purpose and essence
- invariably leads to inquiry into the human condition and the essence of humankind as a whole
- focus on the self

Reflexivity

- refers to circular relationships between cause and effect
- an act of self-reference where examination or action "bends back on", refers to, and affects the entity instigating the action or examination
- commonly refers to the capacity of an agent to recognize forces of socialization and alter their place in the social structure
  - a low level of reflexivity would result in an individual shaped largely by their environment (or 'society')
  - a high level of social reflexivity would be defined by an individual shaping their own norms, tastes, politics, desires, and so on
- focus on the self in relation to society

What is praxis, anyway?

- the process by which a theory, lesson, or skill is enacted, practiced, embodied, or realized
- may also refer to the act of engaging, applying, exercising, realizing, or practicing ideas
- recurrent topic in the field of philosophy, discussed in the writings of Plato, Aristotle, St. Augustine, Immanuel Kant, Søren Kierkegaard, Karl Marx, Martin Heidegger, Hannah Arendt, Paulo Freire, Ludwig von Mises
• Aristotle held that there were three basic activities of man: theoria, poiesis and praxis which corresponded to three types of knowledge:
  
  ▪ theoretical, to which the end goal was truth
  ▪ poietical, to which the end goal was production
  ▪ practical, to which the end goal was action

• Freire
  
  ▪ “Liberation is a praxis: it is the action and reflection of men and women upon their world in order to change it.”

<table>
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<th>Reflection</th>
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<td>Sacrifice of reflection=verbalism</td>
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Visions of “good” teachers

• Akin to notions on “good” women
  
  o Non-combative, professional, nonpolitical, motherly, kind, self-sacrificing, normal
  
  o “These images displace the collective concerns of real teachers with measures of individual behavior based upon adherence to patriarchal conventions, notions of unitary non-contradictory identity, and images of professionalism that preclude the struggles of gender, class, race, and generation. In either case, the multiple identities of the teacher—both given and possible—become lost in a cycle of cultural determinism (Britzman, 2003, p. 6).”

  o “Common and commonsensical notions of “real” or “good” teaching do not involve challenging oppression and can actually help to perpetuate rather than change the oppressive status quo of schools and society… Traditionally, teacher education programs have contributed to this problem by not significantly troubling the ways that dominating views and practices of “good” teachers contribute to oppression and hinder anti-oppressive change (Kumashiro, 2004, p. 1).”
Journal/Observation Prompts

Attempt to be more reflexive than reflective this week and write about your experiences.

- Is it harder to be reflexive than reflective? How so?
- Why is it important for both students and teachers to be reflexive?
- How do you see praxis enacted in your current placement? Give an example, if possible.
- Does the COE or the Praxis Program utilize praxis? Give an example, if possible.
- Why is praxis important?
- Where do your conceptions of “good” teachers come from?
- Do you consider yourself a “good” teacher? Why or why not?
- Is your mentor a “good” teacher? Why or why not?
Appendix G

Gallery Walk Activity Poster I: Reflective vs. Reflexive
Appendix H

Gallery Walk Activity Poster II: What is Praxis, Anyway?

"What is praxis, anyway?"

"practicing how to be a good teacher (actually good)"

"theory → practice"

"collaborative thinking process into practice"

"practice made by theory"
Appendix I

Gallery Walk Activity Poster III: “Good” Teachers Are...

“Good” teachers are...

PASSIONATE

Beneficial
Loving
Compassionate, knowledgable, fun!

enthusiastic
Smart

okay with
questions

HUMOROUS

has snacks

Supportive

Love kids (of all ages)

‘human’
(personable)

approachable

good question asks

‘good listener’
Appendix J

Week Two Session Outline/Handout

Oppression

- exists when one social group, whether knowingly or unconsciously, exploits another social group for its own benefit (Adams, Bell & Griffin)
  - defining features:
    - pervasiveness- exists on personal and institutional levels
    - restricting- restricts self-determination and self-development
    - hierarchical- dominant or privileged groups benefit from disempowerment of subordinated or targeted groups
    - complex, multiple, cross-cutting relationships- effect people in different ways because of the different groups they belong to (intersectionality)
    - internalized- resides in the psyche
    - “isms”: shared and distinctive characteristics- anything which has “ism” attached to it is the result of an oppressive force (i.e. racism, classism, sexism, ableism)

- oppression exists when:
  - the agent group has the power to define and name reality and determine what is “normal,” “real,” or “correct”
  - harassment, discrimination, exploitation, marginalization, and other forms of differential and unequal treatment are institutionalized and systematic—often unconsciously because they are embedded in social structures
  - psychological colonization of the target group occurs through socializing the oppressed to internalize their oppressed condition and collude with the oppressor’s ideology and social system
  - the target group’s culture, language, and history is misrepresented, discounted, or eradicated and the dominant group’s culture is imposed

- “There can be no hierarchies of oppression. I have learned that sexism (a belief in the inherent superiority of one sex over all others and thereby its right to dominance) and heterosexism (a belief in the inherent superiority of one pattern of loving over all others and thereby its right to
dominance) both arise from the same source as racism—a belief in the inherent superiority of one race over all others and thereby its right to dominance...

Any attack against Black people is a lesbian and gay issue, because I and thousands of other Black women are part of the lesbian community. Any attack against lesbians and gays is a Black issue, because thousands of lesbians and gay men are Black. There is no hierarchy of oppression.”


- “Cages. Consider a birdcage. If you look very closely at just one wire in the cage, you cannot see the other wires. If your conception of what is before you is determined by this myopic focus, you could look at that one wire, up and down the length of it, and be unable to see why a bird would not just fly around the wire any time it wanted to go somewhere. Furthermore, even if, one day at a time, you myopically inspected each wire, you still could not see why a bird would gave trouble going past the wires to get anywhere. There is no physical property of any one wire, nothing that the closest scrutiny could discover, that will reveal how a bird could be inhibited or harmed by it except in the most accidental way. It is only when you step back, stop looking at the wires one by one, microscopically, and take a macroscopic view of the whole cage, that you can see why the bird does not go anywhere; and then you will see it in a moment. It will require no great subtlety of mental powers. It is perfectly obvious that the bird is surrounded by a network of systematically related barriers, no one of which would be the least hindrance to its flight, but which, by their relations to each other, are as confining as the solid walls of a dungeon.”

“It is now possible to grasp one of the reasons why oppression can be hard to see and recognize: one can study the elements of an oppressive structure with great care and some good will without seeing the structure as a whole, and hence without seeing or being able to understand that one is looking at a cage and that there are people there who are caged, whose motion and mobility are restricted, whose lives are shaped and reduced.”


**Social Justice**

- **Definitions:**
  - a social movement against oppression (Kumashiro)
  - a vision of society in which the distribution of resources is equitable and all members are physically and psychologically safe and secure, self-determining, and interdependent (Adams, Bell & Griffin)

- **Process for attaining:**
- democratic and participatory, inclusive and affirming of human agency and capacity for working collaboratively to create change (Adams, Bell, & Griffin)

- “The question for educational reformers is not whether schools should be addressing issues of oppression. Schools are always and already addressing oppression, often by reinforcing it or at least allowing it to continue playing out unchallenged, and often without realizing that they are doing so. The question needs to be how schools should be differently addressing issues of oppression. And therein lies the reason for re-centering education on issues of social justice, that is, on a social movement against oppression.” –Kevin Kumashiro, *Against Common Sense: Teaching and Learning towards Social Justice*, 2004

### Other Key Terms

**Agency**: the capacity of an agent (a person or other entity, such as an organization or institution) to act in the world; free will

**Microscopic**: small scale—your life, classroom, school, etc.

**Macroscopic**: large scale—society, the world

**Discrimination**: the prejudicial treatment of an individual based on their actual or perceived group membership

**Hierarchy**: the social positioning of people or groups in which those higher on the continuum have more power and agency and those lower have less

**Intersectionality**: recognition that people are members of multiple groups simultaneously; the study of the interactions of multiple systems of oppression or discrimination

**Privilege**: any special status granted to one group and portrayed as default; a way of framing issues surrounding social inequality, focusing as much on the advantages that one group accrues from society as on the disadvantages that another group experiences

**Prejudice**: a prejudgment, usually negative, about a group or its members (Plous)

**Discrimination**: occurs when members of a group are disadvantaged or treated unfairly as a result of their group membership (Plous)

**Stereotype**: a generalization (or, often, an overgeneralization) about the members of a group (Plous)
Journal/Observation Prompts

Remember to be reflexive (reflecting on the world with a deeper sense of societal implications) during your journaling and observations. Also, keep in mind Freire’s idea of education as liberatory in relationship to his quote, “Liberation is a praxis: it is the action and reflection of men and women upon their world in order to change it.”

- Reflect on a time you found yourself harboring prejudice or discrimination. Where were you? How old were you? Did you realize you were being prejudiced at the time? What led to your prejudice? How does society play a role in prompting your prejudice during this instance? How do you feel about the situation looking back?

- Reflect on a time when you were a victim of prejudice or discrimination. Describe that time. How did it feel? Why were you discriminated against? What does it mean for society as a whole? How does this relate to your teaching?

- Do you consider yourself privileged? Why or why not? Give an example of a time you experienced privilege. If you are privileged for this quality (i.e. Whiteness), how are others discriminated against for lacking it?

- Do you see privilege or discrimination happening in your placement? How about schools in general? Explain.

- Have you been stereotyped? When? Why? Why are stereotypes dangerous?

- Have you ever stereotyped a person or group? Was is conscious or unconscious?

Resources

Stand Up If Activity, [http://www.understandingprejudice.org/teach/activity/icebreak.htm](http://www.understandingprejudice.org/teach/activity/icebreak.htm)
Appendix K

Stand Up If Activity

**Icebreaker 2: Learning About Each Other**

**Goal**

To help the group learn about its members in a nonthreatening way that involves the active participation of everyone.

**Activity**

Begin class by welcoming students and introducing the activity as follows:

“Sometimes it’s difficult to talk about yourself to other people, so in this exercise I’m going to read one dozen statements that go like this: ‘Stand if you’ve ever [X].’ And I want you to do just that -- to stand if a particular statement describes you. If you don’t want to participate, or you don’t want to share something about yourself, you can just remain seated. What I’m hoping is that as you see people stand or sit, you’ll start to learn about each other. So, are you ready?”

Then read the following statements, allowing time for students to look around and see who is standing after each statement:

1. Stand if you’ve ever traveled outside of [your country].
2. Stand if you’re fluent in a language other than [your language]. (Optional: You may wish to ask which languages the standing students speak.)
3. Stand if you’ve ever ordered something to drink in a styrofoam or plastic cup.
4. Stand if you’ve ever been bothered by the unnecessary use of styrofoam or plastic.
5. Stand if you’ve ever thought about transferring from [your school] to a different school.
6. Stand if you’ve ever thought about dropping out of college and just getting a job.
7. Stand if you’ve ever known someone with AIDS.
8. Stand if you’ve ever been the target of racial discrimination.
9. Stand if you’ve ever harbored prejudice against people based on their skin color.
10. Stand if you think you’re less prejudiced than the average student at [your school].
11. Stand if you believe that college students can make the world less prejudiced.
12. Stand if you believe that you can make the world less prejudiced.

After students have sat down for the last time, continue with a class discussion in which you ask students whether they were surprised by anything and whether they learned anything interesting about each other. You might also discuss:

- The level of diversity and multiculturalism in the class
- The commonality of certain feelings, attitudes, and behaviors
- The level of optimism or pessimism about reducing prejudice
- The frequency or infrequency of other noteworthy answers

**Notes**

The statements in this exercise are designed to: (1) progress from easy to more personal and difficult, and (2) set up course topics that will be discussed later (e.g., about what one person can do to reduce prejudice). Instructors may
wish to replace these statements with other statements that relate to their particular course, but they are still advised to lead off with at least three easy items to facilitate full student participation.

**Prompts Used in Learning Community Activity**

- Stand if you have ever travelled outside of the country
- Stand if you are fluent in a language other than English
- Stand if you've ever ordered something to drink in a styrofoam or plastic cup
- Stand if you've ever been bothered by the unnecessary use of styrofoam or plastic
- Stand if you have ever thought about transferring from NAU to a different school
- Stand if you've ever thought about dropping out of Praxis
- Stand if you have ever thought about not being a teacher
- Stand if you've ever thought about dropping out of college and just getting a job
- Stand if you've ever known someone with AIDS
- Stand if you have ever been the target of racial discrimination
- Stand if you have ever been the target of any other kind of discrimination
- Stand if you have ever harbored prejudice against someone based on their skin color
- Stand if you think you are less prejudiced than the average student at NAU
- Stand if you think you are more conscious of your prejudice than the average student at NAU
- Stand if you believe college students can make the world less prejudiced
- Stand if you believe you can make the world less prejudiced
- Stand if you think Praxis unconsciously supports certain prejudices (added by Celeste)
- Stand if you think we have a prejudice in the Praxis cohort about other cohorts (added by Samantha)

Appendix L

Prejudice Mini-Poster

Prejudice: (V., N.)

Pre-conceived judgement about a person or group of people.

by Eleanor, Hildie, and Kate
Discrimination Mini-Poster

Discrimination

having a negative view towards others (and sometimes acting on it) because of "isms" - ex. racism, classism, sexism,... etc.

by Molly and Harriet
Appendix N

Social Justice Mini-Poster

*Social Justice*

*working towards equality & equity/ to be aware of differences*

by Nicole and Kathy
Appendix O

Stereotype Mini-Poster

all lesbians have short hair

Stereotype

A generalized expectation placed on a class/group of people usually with a negative connotation

by Samantha and Kristen
Appendix P

Week Three Session Outline/Handout

Standpoint Theory

- Modern theory developed by Nancy Hartsock in 1983
- Most important concept is that an individual’s own perspectives are shaped by his or her experiences in social locations and social groups.
- Strives to understand the world from the standpoint of women and other marginalized groups in society.
- A standpoint is:
  - A place from which human beings view the world.
  - Influential on how the people adopting it socially construct the world.
  - A mental position from which things are viewed
  - A position from which objects or principles are viewed and according to which they are compared and judged
  - Created by the inequalities of different social groups which creates differences in their standpoints
  - Partial; so (for example) Standpoint feminism coexists with other standpoints.

Intersectionality Theory

- Definition (Ritzer, 2009): “Intersectionality holds that the classical models of oppression within society, such as those based on race/ethnicity, gender, religion, nationality, sexual orientation, class, species or disability do not act independently of one another; instead, these forms of oppression interrelate creating a system of oppression that reflects the ‘intersection’ of multiple forms of discrimination . . . (p. 1, quoted in Grant and Zwier, 2013, p. 182).”
- Coined by feminist scholar Kimberle Crenshaw in 1991
- Popularized by Patricia Hill Collins in the early nineties
- It has been called “the most important theoretical contribution that women’s studies, in conjunction with other fields, has made so far” (McCall, 2005, p. 1771).
- “There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives.” (Lorde, 1984, p. 183)

Journal/Observation Prompts

Remember to be reflexive (reflecting on the world with a deeper sense of societal implications) during your journaling and observations. Also, keep in mind Freire’s idea of education as liberatory in
relationship to his quote, “Liberation is a praxis: it is the action and reflection of men and women upon their world in order to change it.”

- Explore your own Intersectionality—which groups are you simultaneously a member of (race, class, gender, sexual orientation, ability, etc.)? Are you a member of more targeted or privileged groups? How might this effect your teaching? Have you thought about any of these questions regarding the different aspects of your identity before?

- Try to identify the intersectionality of your students (or a small selection of students). What groups are they simultaneously members of? Are they generally more targeted or privileged groups? How should your teaching address their intersectionality? Have you thought about any of these questions regarding the different aspects of your students’ identities before?

- Expound on Audre Lorde’s statement, “There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we don’t live single-issue lives”—what does she mean? Do you agree? What are the downfalls of fighting for one particular type of justice (i.e. civil rights, feminism, gay rights)? How can you address this in your teaching?

- How does you standpoint as a teacher differ from your standpoint as a student? Why should teachers take their students standpoints into consideration? Which aspects of your identity do you think affect your standpoint most? How does your standpoint differ from your students’? How might this affect your classroom or your teaching?
Appendix Q

Privilege Walk Activity

**Privilege Walk Activity**

**Purpose of the Activity:**
The purpose of the Privilege Walk Activity is to learn to recognize how power and privilege can affect our lives even when we are not aware it is happening. The purpose is not to blame anyone for having more power or privilege or for receiving more help in achieving goals, but to have an opportunity to identify both obstacles and benefits experienced in our life.

*Note:* This is a very “high risk” activity that requires trust building and safety for participants; introducing this activity too early in the training or before building trust risks creating resentment and hurt that can inhibit further sharing and openness.

**Supplies and Space Needed:**
- List of statements related to privilege or obstacles
- Slide with instructions for the privilege walk
- Space large enough for participants to form a straight line with an arm’s length between them and the person on their left; there should be space in front of the line to move forward 10 steps or behind to be able to move back 10 steps.

**Directions for the Activity:**
1) Have participants form a straight line across the room about an arm’s length apart, leaving space in front and behind.
2) State: Listen to the following statements, and follow the instructions given. For example, when I read “If you are a white male, take one step forward,” only white males will move and everyone else will stand still. Each step should be an average length step. No one is going to check up on you, so if you feel you qualify to take a step then do so, if not then you may stay where you are. You are the judge of what you should do.
3) Read the statements one at a time allowing time for participants to take a step.
4) When all the statements have been read process the activity using the following questions:
   - What is your “gut reaction” to where you find yourself at the end of this list of privileges?
   - Are you surprised at where you are? How does it feel to be in front? In the middle? In back? Did you come to any new realizations? If so, which one had the most impact?

**Privilege Walk Statements**
- If you are a white male take one step forward.
- If there have been times in your life when you skipped a meal because there was no food in the house take one step backward.
- If you have visible or invisible disabilities take one step backward.
- If you attended (grade) school with people you felt were like yourself take one step forward.
- If you grew up in an urban setting take one step backward.
• If your family had health insurance take one step forward.
• If your work holidays coincide with religious holidays that you celebrate take one step forward.
• If you feel good about how your identified culture is portrayed by the media take one step forward.
• If you have been the victim of physical violence based on your gender, ethnicity, age or sexual orientation take one step backward.
• If you have ever felt passed over for an employment position based on your gender, ethnicity, age or sexual orientation take one step backward.
• If you were born in the United States take one step forward.
• If English is your first language take one step forward.
• If you have been divorced or impacted by divorce take one step backward.
• If you came from a supportive family environment take one step forward.
• If you have completed high school take one step forward.
• If you were able to complete college take one step forward.
• If you are a citizen of the United States take one step forward.
• If you took out loans for your education take one step backward.
• If you attended private school take one step forward.
• If you have ever felt unsafe walking alone at night take one step backward.

http://www.albany.edu/ssw/ecf/pdf/Module%205_1_Privilege%20Walk%20Activity.pdf
Appendix R

Personal Identity Wheel Exercise

Step One: Write down all of your identities (i.e. your race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, etc.)

Step Two: Categorize each identity as...
- Targeted (T): An identity that is the target of prejudice/discrimination
- Advantaged (A): An identity that is privileged

Step Three: Using the circle below, create a pie chart that shows your identities, with the size of each pie piece relating to how aware you are of each identity on a daily basis.
Personal Identity Wheel Example

- Queer (T)
- White (A)
- Gender Conforming Bio Female (A&T)
- Middle Class (A)
- Educated (A)
- Christian (A)
- Able Bodied (A)

**Queer**—I am often a target due to my identity of queer and am very aware of my Queer Identity on a daily basis based on constantly feeling “othered” in conversations/interactions.

**White**—I am very privileged due to my white identity and have done a lot of personal work around my white privilege, so this is an area that I am more conscious of now than I was only 5 years ago.

**Gender Conforming Bio Female**—I am targeted due to the fact that I am female, and women are still oppressed in our society. However, I am also privileged because my sex (genitals/genes) match my gender identity, which for some is not true. I am pretty aware of being a woman/female on a daily basis due to interacting with a lot of men.

**Middle Class**—I am privileged financially in that I have all of my basic needs met on a daily basis. I don’t think about that as often as I should, but am aware of it more than some of my other identities.

**Educated**—I am very privileged to have the education I do and benefit from it. Again, I’m aware of it due to the fact that I work in the university environment, but I tend to not think about it as a privilege as often as I should.

**Christian**—I am privileged in that I am a Christian in the United States, which values my religious beliefs over others and even provides me with national holidays to celebrate most of my important holidays. I often take this for granted.

**Able Bodied**—I am very privileged in that I do not have to think about how I will be able to get from point a to point b or worry about being able to communicate with others. I do not think about this identity and the privileges I have enough, and is a learning edge for me currently.

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**CAMPUS CULTURE & SOCIAL JUSTICE: BECOME A TRUE ALLY FOR OPPRESSED GROUPS**

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**Personal Identity Wheel Exercise**

**Discussion Questions**

1. Which identities were you more aware of?
2. Were the identities you are more aware of targeted or advantaged? Why do you think that is?
3. Which identities do you take for granted and not think about often?
4. Were the identities you are less aware of targeted or advantaged? Why do you think that is?
5. From this exercise, can you identify one or two identities in which you need to work on being more aware of?
6. What does this have to do with being an Ally?

**Source:** Whomever originally developed this activity is unknown.

Appendix S

Intersecting Axes of Privilege, Domination, and Oppression

*Intersecting Axes of Privilege, Domination, and Oppression*

Appendix T

Week Four Session Outline/Handout

History of Public Education in the US

1647
The General Court of the Massachusetts Bay Colony decrees that every town of fifty families should have an elementary school and that every town of 100 families should have a Latin school. The goal is to ensure that Puritan children learn to read the Bible and receive basic information about their Calvinist religion.

1779
Thomas Jefferson proposes a two-track educational system, with different tracks in his words for "the laboring and the learned." Scholarship would allow a very few of the laboring class to advance, Jefferson says, by "raking a few geniuses from the rubbish."

1785
The Continental Congress (before the U.S. Constitution was ratified) passes a law calling for a survey of the "Northwest Territory" which included what was to become the state of Ohio. The law created "townships," reserving a portion of each township for a local school. From these "land grants" eventually came the U.S. system of "land grant universities," the state public universities that exist today. Of course in order to create these townships, the Continental Congress assumes it has the right to give away or sell land that is already occupied by Native people.

1790
Pennsylvania state constitution calls for free public education but only for poor children. It is expected that rich people will pay for their children's schooling.

1805
New York Public School Society formed by wealthy businessmen to provide education for poor children. Schools are run on the "Lancasterian" model, in which one "master" can teach hundreds of students in a single room. The master gives a rote lesson to the older students, who then pass it down to the younger students. These schools emphasize discipline and obedience qualities that factory owners want in their workers.

1817
A petition presented in the Boston Town Meeting calls for establishing of a system of free public primary schools. Main support comes from local merchants, businessmen and wealthier artisans. Many wage earners oppose it, because they don't want to pay the taxes.

1820
First public high school in the U.S., Boston English, opens.

1827
Massachusetts passes a law making all grades of public school open to all pupils free of charge.

1830s
By this time, most southern states have laws forbidding teaching people in slavery to read. Even so, around 5 percent become literate at great personal risk.

1820-1860
The percentage of people working in agriculture plummets as family farms are gobbled up by larger agricultural businesses and people are forced to look for work in towns and cities. At the same time, cities grow tremendously, fueled by new manufacturing industries, the influx of people from rural areas and many immigrants from Europe. During the 10 years from 1846 to 1856, 3.1 million immigrants arrive a number equal to one eighth of the entire U.S. population. Owners of industry needed a docile, obedient workforce and look to public schools to provide it.
1836
Slave-owner David Bowie and Indian-killer Davy Crockett are among those killed in the Battle of the Alamo in Texas, in their attempt to take Texas by force from Mexico.

1837
Horace Mann becomes head of the newly formed Massachusetts State Board of Education. Edmund Dwight, a major industrialist, thinks a state board of education was so important to factory owners that he offered to supplement the state salary with extra money of his own.

1840s
Over a million Irish immigrants arrive in the United States, driven out of their homes in Ireland by the potato famine. Irish Catholics in New York City struggle for local neighborhood control of schools as a way of preventing their children from being force-fed a Protestant curriculum.

1845
The United States annexes Texas.

1846
President James Polk orders the invasion of Mexico.

1848
Massachusetts Reform School at Westboro opens, where children who have refused to attend public schools are sent. This begins a long tradition of “reform schools,” which combine the education and juvenile justice systems.

1848
The war against Mexico ends with the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo, which gives the United States almost half of what was then Mexico. This includes all of what is now the U.S. Southwest, plus parts of Utah, Nevada and Wyoming and most of California. The treaty guarantees citizenship rights to everyone living in these areas mostly Mexicans and Native people. It also guarantees the continued use of the Spanish language, including in education. One hundred fifty years later, in 1998, California breaks that treaty, by passing Proposition 227, which would make it illegal for teachers to speak Spanish in public schools.

1851
State of Massachusetts passes first its compulsory education law. The goal is to make sure that the children of poor immigrants get “civilized” and learn obedience and restraint, so they make good workers and don’t contribute to social upheaval.

1864
Congress makes it illegal for Native Americans to be taught in their native languages. Native children as young as four years old are taken from their parents and sent to Bureau of Indian Affairs off-reservation boarding schools, whose goal, as one BIA official put it, is to “kill the Indian to save the man.”

1865-1877
African Americans mobilize to bring public education to the South for the first time. After the Civil War, and with the legal end of slavery, African Americans in the South make alliances with white Republicans to push for many political changes, including for the first time rewriting state constitutions to guarantee free public education. In practice, white children benefit more than Black children.

1877-1900
Reconstruction ends in 1877 when federal troops, which had occupied the South since the end of the Civil War are withdrawn. Whites regain political control of the South and lay the foundations of legal segregation.

1893-1913
Size of school boards in the country’s 28 biggest cities is cut in half. Most local district (or "ward") based positions are eliminated, in favor of city-wide elections. This means that local immigrant communities lose control of their local
schools. Make-up of school boards changes from small local businessmen and some wage earners to professionals (like doctors and lawyers), big businessmen and other members of the richest classes.

1896
Plessy v. Ferguson decision. The U.S. Supreme Court rules that the state of Louisiana has the right to require "separate but equal" railroad cars for Blacks and whites. This decision means that the federal government officially recognizes segregation as legal. One result is that southern states pass laws requiring racial segregation in public schools.

1905
The U.S. Supreme Court requires California to extend public education to the children of Chinese immigrants.

1917
Smith-Hughes Act passes, providing federal funding for vocational education. Big manufacturing corporations push this, because they want to remove job skill training from the apprenticeship programs of trade unions and bring it under their own control.

1924
An act of Congress makes Native Americans U.S. citizens for the first time.

1930-1950
The NAACP brings a series of suits over unequal teachers' pay for Blacks and whites in southern states. At the same time, southern states realize they are losing African American labor to the northern cities. These two sources of pressure resulted in some increase of spending on Black schools in the South.

1932
A survey of 150 school districts reveals that three quarters of them are using so-called intelligence testing to place students in different academic tracks.

1945
At the end of World War 2, the G.I. Bill of Rights gives thousands of working class men college scholarships for the first time in U.S. history.

1948
Educational Testing Service is formed, merging the College Entrance Examination Board, the Cooperative Test Service, the Graduate Records Office, the National Committee on Teachers Examinations and others, with huge grants from the Rockefeller and Carnegie foundations. These testing services continued the work of eugenacists like Carl Brigham (originator of the SAT) who did research "proving" that immigrants were feeble-minded.

1954
Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka. The Supreme Court unanimously agrees that segregated schools are "inherently unequal" and must be abolished. Almost 45 years later in 1998, schools, especially in the north, are as segregated as ever.

1957
A federal court orders integration of Little Rock, Arkansas public schools. Governor Orval Faubus sends his National Guard to physically prevent nine African American students from enrolling at all-white Central High School. Reluctantly, President Eisenhower sends federal troops to enforce the court order not because he supports desegregation, but because he can't let a state governor use military power to defy the U.S. federal government.

1968
African American parents and white teachers clash in the Ocean Hill-Brownsville area of New York City, over the issue of community control of the schools. Teachers go on strike, and the community organizes freedom schools while the public schools are closed.

1974
Milliken v. Bradley. A Supreme Court made up of Richard Nixon's appointees rules that schools may not be
desegregated across school districts. This effectively legally segregates students of color in inner-city districts from white students in wealthier white suburban districts.

**Late 1970s**
The so-called “taxpayers' revolt” leads to the passage of Proposition 13 in California, and copy-cat measures like Proposition 2-1/2 in Massachusetts. These propositions freeze property taxes, which are a major source of funding for public schools. As a result, in twenty years California drops from first in the nation in per-student spending in 1978 to number 43 in 1998.

**1980s**
The federal Tribal Colleges Act establishes a community college on every Indian reservation, which allows young people to go to college without leaving their families.

**1994**
Proposition 187 passes in California, making it illegal for children of undocumented immigrants to attend public school. Federal courts hold Proposition 187 unconstitutional, but anti-immigrant feeling spreads across the country.

**1996**
Leading the way backwards again, California passes Proposition 209, which outlaws affirmative action in public employment, public contracting and public education. Other states jump on the bandwagon with their own initiatives and right wing elements hope to pass similar legislation on a federal level.

**1998**
California again! This time a multi-millionaire named Ron Unz manages to put a measure on the June 1998 ballot outlawing bilingual education in California.

*from http://www.raceforward.org/research/reports/historical-timeline-public-education-us*

**Quotes**

- “Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity or it becomes the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world.” – Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*

- “Educational structures wield extraordinary ideological power due to their role in teaching what the culture has deemed as important and valuable to future generations. Ministries of Education, textbook publishers, and teachers determine what lessons are passed on to students and whose knowledge or "truth" is valued.” –Michael Apple, *Ideology and Curriculum*

- "Our schools are no closer in connecting the education of children to their development as human beings: each child as an individual with a unique contribution to make to the world. Until this is done, our schools will fail to help children become active learners, connected to their society, and empowered to accomplish things within it." -Paula Polk Lillard, *Montessori Today: A Comprehensive Approach to Education from Birth to Adulthood*
Journal/Observation Prompts

- “Reflex” on any of the above quotes. Do you agree with the quote? Why or why not?

- What was your knowledge of the history and function of public education before today? How does your prior knowledge compare to your current knowledge? How does it affect your entering into the field of education?

- What conclusions have you drawn about the function and purpose of public education? Do you think these have changed since its inception? Do you think they should change? What is your role in this as an educator?

- Which events on the above timeline struck you most? Can you see their lingering effect on public education today? Are there any examples of their effects in your placement or from your own school experiences?
Appendix U

When Life Gives You Lemons Activity

**When Life Gives You Lemons Icebreaker Activity**

**Goal**

To show children that despite outside differences, people are often similar on the inside.

**Activity**

Gather a group of young children and give one lemon to each child. Then ask the children to "get to know your lemon." Children will examine their lemons -- smell them, touch them, throw them in the air, and roll them around. After a few minutes, collect the lemons in a big basket, and ask the children to find their lemons in the pile. Remarkably, most children will recognize their lemons at once. Some will even get protective of them.

Next, ask the children to describe how they recognized their lemons. "My lemon was big," one might say. "My lemon had a mark on one side." And another, "My lemon had dents and bruises." Then talk about how people, too, come in different sizes, different shapes, different shades of color, different "dents and bruises."

After exploring these ideas, collect the lemons again but this time peel the lemons before placing them in the basket. Then ask the children to again find their lemon. Presented with this quandary, children will usually exclaim, "But the lemons all look the same!" This reaction opens the door to discussing how people, like lemons, are often similar on the inside.

This 15-minute activity can have a long-lasting effect, especially if children are reminded of the lesson in times of conflict.

**Variations**

The lesson also works well with apples or potatoes.

**Source**

-isms

- **-ism** (i.e. racism, sexism, ableism): the systematic subordination or members of targeted groups (Blacks, gays, etc.) who have relatively little social power in the United States by members of the agent racial group who have relatively more social power (Whites, heterosexuals, males, etc.) (Adams, Bell, Griffin, 1997)

- **-ism = power + bias** (i.e. racism = power + race bias, sexism = power + sex bias) (Rodriguez, 1986)

- **Individual -ism**: the beliefs, attitudes, and actions of individuals that support or perpetuate an ism. Individual -isms can be both active and passive. (Adams, Bell, and Griffin, 1997)

- **Active -ism**: Actions which have as their stated or explicit goal the maintenance of the system of the -ism and the oppression of those in the targeted groups. People who participate in active -isms advocate the continued subjugation of members of the targeted groups and protection of “the rights” of members of the agent group. These goals are often supported by a belief in the inferiority of targeted groups and the superiority of agent groups, their culture, and values. (Adams, Bell, and Griffin, 1997)

- **Passive -ism**: Beliefs, attitudes, and actions that contribute to the maintenance of an -ism, without openly advocating violence or oppression. The conscious and unconscious maintenance of attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that support the system of the -ism and the correlating prejudice and dominance. (Adams, Bell, and Griffin, 1997)

- **Targets**: members of social identity groups that are disenfranchised, exploited, and victimized in a variety of ways by the oppressor and the oppressor’s system or institution (Adams, Bell, Griffin, 1997)

- **Agents**: members of dominant social groups privileged by birth or acquisition who knowingly or unknowingly exploit and reap unfair advantage over members of target groups (Adams, Bell, Griffin, 1997)

### Journal/Observation Prompts

Remember to be reflexive (reflecting on the world with a deeper sense of societal implications) during your journaling and observations. Also, keep in mind Freire’s idea of education as liberatory in relationship to his quote, “Liberation is a praxis: it is the action and reflection of men and women upon their world in order to change it.”

- Do you consider yourself an agent or a target? Why? Does this affect your teaching? How so?
Reflex on an example of racism, sexism, heterosexism, or ableism from your own life. Was it an active or passive -ism? Was is individual or institutional? How did it directly or indirectly effect you? What were the benefits to the agent group gained by the playing out of this -ism? What were the detriments to the target group? How do you feel about this?

Do you see racism, sexism, heterosexism, or ableism playing out in your current or past placements? Give examples, if possible. Do you seem these -isms playing out in schools in general? Why do you think this is? What is the purpose? What do the agent groups gain by oppressing the target groups? How do you feel about this?
Appendix W

Week Six Session Outline/Handout

Social Justice Education Resources

- **Against Common Sense: Teaching and Learning Toward Social Justice** by Kevin Kumashiro
  Drawing on his own teaching experiences with diverse grades and subjects, Kumashiro explores anti-oppressive education in different subject areas. This book connects social justice education theory to practice and includes print and online resources for teachers and students. Kumashiro’s main argument revolves around the idea that teachers must break out of the commonsensical views of teaching that they learn in teacher preparation programs and from their own experiences as students in order to truly embrace anti-oppressive education.

- **Handbook of Social Justice in Education** edited by Ayers, Quinn, and Stovall
  This book explores education theory, research, and practice through historical and theoretical perspectives. The authors suggest we begin promoting social justice by “abandoning the safe rhetoric of tolerance and engaging the entangled spaces of race, class, gender, sexuality, disability, and environment through an educational lens.” They also claim that social justice must be at the very core of teaching in a truly democratic society.

- **Is Everyone Really Equal?: An Introduction to Key Concepts in Social Justice Education** by Sensoy and DiAngelo
  This practical handbook introduces social justice education and provides tools for developing "critical social justice literacy" and taking action to create a more just society. It aims to explain key concepts in social justice education: critical thinking, socialization, group identity, prejudice, discrimination, oppression, power, privilege, and White supremacy; examples, scenarios, and vignettes illustrate these concepts. There are also discussion questions and extension activities at the end of each chapter, and an appendix for those newer to teaching social justice education.

- **New Global Citizens** ([www.newglobalcitizens.org](http://www.newglobalcitizens.org))
  New Global Citizens is a non-profit organization whose mission is “to inspire youth to be engaged citizens.” Their vision is to create leaders, change agents, and advocates who are dedicated to solving the world’s greatest challenges. Their work focuses on the following ten global issues: extreme hunger, gender equality, maternal health, child mortality, universal education, epidemics, environmental sustainability, armed conflict, economic sustainability, and natural disasters. Their website includes resources on professional development as well as curriculum for the classroom and afterschool programs.

- **Promoting Diversity and Social Justice: Educating People from Privileged Groups** by Diane Goodman
  Useful primarily in college classrooms, this book provides theories and strategies designed for working with people from privileged groups. This practical guide offers tools that allow educators to be more reflective and intentional in their work—helping them to consider who
they’re working with, what they’re doing, why they’re doing it and how to educate more effectively. It is a great resource for individuals who are new to examining their own privilege.

- **Public Achievement** (http://www.augsburg.edu/democracy/publicachievement/)
  Public Achievement is a program developed by the Center of Democracy and Citizenship at Augsburg College. They promote civic engagement through a youth-centered approach where teachers act as coaches rather than authoritarians. PA centers on the following core concepts: public work, politics, power, citizenship, democracy, freedom, public, free spaces, interests, diversity, power, and accountability/responsibility. There is a wealth of resources, including curricular outlines, evaluation materials, and instructional guides for implementing PA in your classroom or after-school program available at http://inside.augsburg.edu/publicachievement/).

- **Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice** edited by Adams, Bell, and Griffin
  This book is considered one of the central texts in the field of social justice education. It explores the theoretical and pedagogical foundations of social justice, exploring the problem of oppression throughout history. This sourcebook includes curricular frameworks designed for the college classroom, though curriculum can be modified for use in middle or high school settings with ease. The second editions includes a CD-ROM of appendices, handouts, and preparation guides. If you purchase only one social justice education resource, I highly recommend that this book be it.

- **Teaching Tolerance** (www.tolerance.org)
  Teaching Tolerance, a project of the Southern Poverty Law Center, is a non-profit organization which works to reduce prejudice, improve intergroup relations, and support equitable schooling for our nation’s students. They provide free educational materials to educators, including Teaching Tolerance Magazine, is published three times a year. It is available in both print and pdf and is free for teachers (you can subscribe at http://www.tolerance.org/magazine/subscribe). The magazine includes articles on social justice issues as well as curriculum to be used in K-12 classrooms. The website features free professional development and classroom resources for K-12 teachers as well as a number of resources available for purchase. They offer a free newsletter for teachers, which you can sign up for at http://www.tolerance.org/newsletter/signup.

- **Understanding Prejudice and Discrimination** edited by Scott Plous
  In this college-level anthology, Plous has compiled a variety of essays on the topics of stereotyping, stigmatization, isms, and reducing prejudice. The website www.understandingprejudice.org features curriculum for both K-12 and college classrooms that were created to compliment the anthology. The website includes readings, exercises and demonstrations, a multimedia center, a teacher’s corner, and many more resources for students and teachers alike to explore. The Teacher’s Corner tab will bring you to tips, syllabi, activities, assignments, and springboards for discussion to be used in higher education as well as elementary and secondary schools.
Journal/Observation Prompts

Remember to be reflexive (reflecting on the world with a deeper sense of societal implications) during your journaling and observations. Also, keep in mind Freire's idea of education as liberatory in relationship to his quote, “Liberation is a praxis: it is the action and reflection of men and women upon their world in order to change it.”

- Are there any concepts related to social justice that we have not covered or you feel confused about and would like to explore in depth if we had more time? Why are these topics of interest to you? How might they relate to classroom practices or pedagogy?

- How do you see yourself applying the concepts we have covered over the past six weeks in your current and future placements? How about in your own classroom once you begin teaching full-time? Do you foresee any risks or barriers to promoting these concepts in your placements or classrooms?

- Why do you want to be a teacher? What made you choose this profession?
Appendix X

Certificate of Achievement

CERTIFICATE of ACHIEVEMENT
THIS ACKNOWLEDGES THAT

[Recipient Name]

HAS SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED THE SIX-HOUR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT COURSE

MAKING SOCIAL JUSTICE PART OF YOUR PRAXIS

FEBRUARY 27TH 2014

Signed, Jaclyn Pace, M.A Sustainable Communities Candidate