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Social Justice Teaching as a Process:

Educators Working to Sustain & Enhance Social Justice Teaching in Urban Schools

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in Education

by

Oscar Navarro

2016

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERATION

Social Justice Teaching as a Process:

Educators Working to Sustain & Enhance Social Justice Teaching in Urban Schools

by

Oscar Navarro

Doctor of Philosophy in Education

University of California, Los Angeles, 2016

Professor Tyrone C. Howard, Chair

Since the passing of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), it has become increasingly difficult to teach for social justice in urban schools. The post-NCLB era has led to standardized and narrowed curriculum that has pushed equity based instruction to the margins. The study examined, how educators sustained and enhanced social justice teaching in urban secondary schools through a critical inquiry group (CIG). A qualitative case study methodology and critical inquiry group design was utilized to investigate six participants across the teaching experience spectrum. Research methods included participant observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. The study had three key findings; the first finding revealed that the CIG structured a community of transformative praxis. Secondly, the participants' collaboration within the CIG involved trust, vulnerability, and accountability. The last finding described that all of the participants, regardless of years of teaching experience, employed social justice teaching and further suggests that social justice teaching is a process.

The dissertation of Oscar Navarro is approved.

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated my boys, Mateo and Joaquin. It is an honor to be your father and

watch you grow. I hope that the two of you will continue to draw from your curiosity,

compassion, determination, and restlessness throughout your lives.

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ACKNOWLEDMENTS

There are many people that I want to acknowledge and thank. I want to begin with the two special women in my life, my mom and wife. Mom, my commitment to social justice comes from the way that you raised my brothers and I. You taught us by example, how to be compassionate, hard working, and a good person. These lessons have been foundational to whom I am and guide my work. Blanca, you have been my soul mate since we met at UCLA, a decade ago. I love you and am so blessed to have you by my side. Throughout the dissertation, you have been my biggest supporter, helping me think through ideas, not letting me fall into self doubt and allowing me to realize that I can be a teacher and a scholar. Most importantly, you have never let me forget about our family. You and the boys have kept me grounded and filled with joy. I also want to acknowledge my brothers, George, Guy, and Gabriel and our dad. While, we may not always see each other or be around, you have all played an important role in my life. In addition, I also want to acknowledge mis suegros y cunadas. Gracias por todo su apoyo. Ustedes han tenido una gran influencia en mis estudios, trabajo, y manera de ser.

In addition to family, I want to thank those who have provided guidance throughout the dissertation. First, I want to thank my amazing dissertation committee, Tyrone, Danny, Megan, Jamy, and Jeff. Thank you for providing thoughtful and critical feedback that pushed me to be a better scholar. I especially want to thank my advisor and dissertation chair, Tyrone. Throughout these five years, it has been honor and privilege to learn from someone that is such a great teacher, researcher, mentor, advocate, and friend. I also want to acknowledge the support that I received from the faculty and staff at UCLA's Graduate School of Education & Information studies in my doctoral studies, especially Amy and Harmeet. Thank you to the People's cohort at UCLA, especially Antonio for all of your advice throughout the process. Lastly, special thank to the People's, TIG, and my former students for the lessons you have provided along the way.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Coming to the Work

For most of my adult life, I have been devoted to social justice teaching[1] in urban schools as a high school teacher, teacher educator, activist, and researcher. My commitment to the field can be traced back to my childhood. Growing up as a working class Chicano in Los Angeles County, I distinctly remember feelings of indignation in and out of schools. Throughout elementary school, I was a successful student by all the traditional measures, such as, grades, student awards, state exams, however, as I progressed through secondary education, feelings of indignation resulted in mental and physical withdraw from schooling. During this time, I attended underserved schools, received subpar instruction, low expectations, and endured racial microaggressions by many of my teachers. Outside of school, I was repeatedly stopped and detained by police—leading to wrongful arrests—; I witnessed random acts of violence and drug trafficking, and experienced my apartment being robbed. Inside my home, I saw my mother struggling to raise her sons with limited financial or social resources. These experiences conveyed that something was inherently wrong. However, it would not be until my early twenties that I became better equipped to understand and name oppression, and work towards equity in urban schools. This formative period would be the catalyst to teach for social justice in two urban high schools in South Central Los Angeles.

In June of 2006, I started teaching at a large comprehensive multi-track public high school. The school was struggling to fill a Life Skills position for English Language Learners (ELL). I was told that if I could survive the last month of the second semester then I could take a

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[1] Throughout this paper, I define social justice teaching as a pedagogical approach in and out of the classroom that works to address systemic inequity through academic and critical literacy, towards social action (Ayers, 1998; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Greene, 1998; Hackman, 2005; Picower, 2012).

Social Studies position the following term. Most of the periods required Spanish instruction and I received little to no curricular or instructional resources. I taught in a small-dilapidated bungalow that did not have air condition, sufficient chairs or desks for my largest class of thirty-eight students. The students said that they had had more than twenty substitute teachers that took poor record keeping of their attendance, grades, and provided overall low quality instruction. They were apathetic at best to see another instructor. My first teaching experience was challenging, I was not fully prepared to teach, let alone for social justice. I had little engagement from the students and I could not decipher if it was due to my *pocho*2 Spanish, haphazard rules and procedures, disconnected lesson plans, or the sweltering summer heat.   Nevertheless, the administrator was pleased and offered me a History position the following term.

This experience taught me that teaching for social justice in an urban school setting is *hard* and requires more effort that I initially imagined. As a social justice educator3 (SJE) operating in an urban school I took on the challenge by putting in long hours planning critical and culturally and responsive lessons, reflecting on practice, collaborating with like-minded educators, building meaningful relationships with students, families, and community members. The dysfunction of the school that first frustrated my teaching turned out to be one of the most useful resources to integrate academic and critical literacy.   My teaching efforts would later lead to becoming a recipient of teacher of the year award and accolades and also elected as a lead teacher by my colleagues. However, I experienced various obstacles, my teaching was repetitively impacted by accountability efforts that constantly restructured the school in which I taught. Additionally, I received a reduction in force (pink slip) notice, which led to me to take a

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2 Pocho is a term that describes U.S. born Latinos who do not speak Spanish fluently.

3 Throughout this paper, I will be using the acronym SJE and SJEs when referring to social justice educator and educators, respectively. SJEs engage in social justice teaching—i.e., a pedagogical approach in and out of the classroom that works to address systemic inequity through academic and critical literacy, towards social action (Ayers, 1998; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Greene, 1998; Hackman, 2005; Picower, 2012).

teaching position at a corporate managed charter high school. In this environment, I was held to rigid interpretations of content standards that were aligned with high stakes tests. I was told by administrators not to teach for social justice and to remove culturally relevant curriculum from my lesson plans. Nevertheless, I maintained my commitment to social justice teaching yet had to endure harassment by school administration.

Throughout my teaching career, I also taught in a social justice themed teacher education program and participated in teacher activist organizations, which further informed my work as a social justice educator. As a teacher educator, I witnessed pre- and in-service teachers struggle to implement social justice teaching in urban school classrooms. These experiences reified that I was not alone. Fellow like minded colleagues were experiencing similar challenges and were chastised for their approaches and subsequently left the profession. However, I also witnessed educators that were actively working to resist the status quo in education through teacher activist networks. As a member of a teacher activist organization, I worked alongside like-minded educators that collectively sought to address larger structural issues while improving their teaching practice. Through this organization, I participated in a critical inquiry group that supported me in my efforts to teach for social justice. During critical inquiry group meetings we read critical texts, shared pedagogical strategies, and lessons. At the end of my fifth year of teaching, I made the difficult decision to leave the classroom and enter graduate school to examine how educators were teaching for social justice in urban schools since the passing of the *No Child Left Behind* Act of 2001 (post-NCLB era). My experiences in and out of schools inform my positionality as a researcher and this dissertation. In the following pages, I will explain how the post-NCLB era has creating a hostile environment for social justice teaching in urban schools.

Problem Statement

In 1970, Brazilian educator Paulo Freire explained that education, more specifically; teaching was being delivered through a *banking model*. This model provides a curriculum that is disconnected from life, mechanical, dehumanizes, and inhibits students from engaging in learning that can lead to self-actualization or transforming society (Freire, 2001, 2003). The banking model of education states that knowledge moves in one direction, teachers deposit information into the depositories, the students (Freire, 2003). Moreover, the banking model illuminates how schools systemically operate to marginalize the most vulnerable members of society and maintain oppression, instead of using education as a vehicle towards self-actualization or societal transformation.

The current post-NCLB era, which I describe as a period of standardized curriculum aligned to high-stakes tests, accountability measures, and privatization is a contemporary example of Freire's banking model, which most deeply impacts urban schools students (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Ede, 2006; Johnson, 2012; Lipman, 2011; Milner, 2013). An urban (intensive) school4 is an elementary or secondary school (Pre-K-12), concentrated in a large metropolitan city, that is usually confronted with adverse educational and environment factors and identified as low performing (Anyon, 1997; Milner, 2012). The educational and social despair that most urban schools endure make them more vulnerable to the negative effects of standardized curriculum, accountability measures, and privatization (Ede, 2006; Johnson, 2012; Lipman, 2011; Milner, 2013).

Freire provides insight for social justice teaching in urban schools. He (2003) urged educators, interested in providing a liberatory education for the oppressed to abandon the

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4 For the remainder of this paper, I will use the above-mentioned definition of urban intensive schools when referring to urban schools.

banking model in favor of a problem-posing education. "In problem-posing education, people develop their power to perceive critically *the way they exist* in the word *with which* and *in which* they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation" (Freire, 2003, p. 83). While Freire's problem-posing education provides keen insight for social justice educators in urban schools, the post-NCLB era provides multiple obstacles for social justice teaching, such as standardization, narrowed curriculum, and marginalization of equity based pedagogies that leads to teacher demoralization, undermines instruction, forces some to teach in a state of fear, or leave the classroom (Crocco & Costigan, 2007; Milner, 2013; Picower, 2011; Santoro, 2011; Sleeter, 2012; Sleeter & Stillman, 2007; Stillman, 2009).

Teaching for Social Justice in Urban Schools

It is important to note that most teachers enter the profession to make a positive difference in students' lives (Brookhart & Freeman, 1992). However, social justice educators work in a particular way to positively impact students lives and are more likely to teach in urban schools (Quartz, 2003). Social justice teaching develops educators and students ability to: 1) be humane – compassionate to others, 2) be knowledgeable – well informed on a topic, and 3) take action – work towards fairness. The literature states that social justice teaching is a pedagogical approach in and out of the classroom that works to address systemic inequity through academic and critical literacy, towards social action (Ayers, 1998; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Greene, 1998; Hackman, 2005; Picower, 2012). More specifically, social justice teaching provides an academically rigorous curriculum that deconstructs oppression and empowers marginalized students; tends to individual student needs, in a nurturing and caring manner; and extends learning beyond the classroom, such as activism (Ayers, 1998; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Greene, 1998; Hackman, 2005; Picower, 2012).

At a time when educators are avoiding urban schools, SJEs are moving toward urban schools to address educational and social disparity. However, many of these educators are being met with a hostile climate for their approach in the classroom. Social justice teaching is being adversely impacted by a political climate that is marginalizing equity based pedagogies; moreover, SJEs are being forced to either teach in a state of fear, compromise their social justice beliefs, or leave the classroom (Gutierrez, Asato, Santos, & Gotanda, 2002; Lipman, 2009; McNeil, 2009; Picower, 2011; Sleeter, 2012; Sleeter & Stillman, 2007; Stillman, 2009).

There are less curricular opportunities to teach for social justice. Within the current era of education, standardized curriculum is fore fronted while equity-based pedagogies are marginalized (Gutierrez et al., 2002; Sleeter, 2012; Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2014). Education is experiencing a retreat from the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act focus on equality for historically marginalized and linguistically diverse students (Gutierrez et al., 2002). For example, recent legislation, such as California's Proposition 227 and Arizona's Proposition 203, limited bilingual education and primary language instruction for linguistically diverse students, which further reifies the notion of standardize instruction for all students (Gutierrez et al., 2002). Moreover, in 2010, Ethnic Studies was banned in Arizona's elementary and secondary public schools through HB 2281, which eliminated successful programs such as the Mexican American Studies in the Tucson Unified School District (Delgado, 2013). The removal of ethnic studies was prompted over social justice teaching that was occurring in Tucson schools (Delgado, 2013; Tintiangco-Cubales, et al., 2014). As a result, culturally and equity driven instruction and text has been outlawed in Arizona schools. While the case in Arizona may seem unique, Sleeter (2012) reminds us that throughout the nation, culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP) is being substituted by standardized curriculum. Sleeter (2012) explains, "the work of teachers is standardized and pressurized, attempts to work with CRP become

increasingly difficult" (Sleeter, 2012, p. 577). As a result teachers have fewer opportunities to engage in social justice teaching and in some cases are covertly engaging in equity-based teaching (Picower, 2011; Stillman, 2009).

Equity minded teachers in urban schools are often under tremendous pressure to comply with standardization and accountability (Stillman, 2009). The current context is narrowing and standardizing curriculum, and undermining teacher curricular autonomy (Crocco & Costigan, 2007). Educators are being strategic, if not covert, in how they engage in equity based teaching within the post NCLB era (Picower, 2011; Stillman, 2009). Picower (2011) further explains "neoliberal policies such as mandated, uniform curriculum and high stakes testing created an ideological environment hostile to [social justice education]" (p. 59). More specifically, Picower argues that this context has caused many educators committed to social justice to "teach in a state of fear," which adversely impacts their classrooms. Teachers in Picower's (2011) study stated that they were overwhelmed by mandated curriculum, alienated by their peers due to their social justice stance, and had colleagues spy on their teaching and report it to administrators. These conditions weigh on teachers' decision to stay in the classroom.

Crocco & Costigan interviewed over 200 urban teachers in New York and found that due to "test pressures, scripted lessons, and mandated curriculum … [urban teachers] leave city school" (p. 530). While this phenomenon is often understood as teacher burn-out, Santoro (2007) argues that the "burnout explanation fails to account for situations where the conditions of teaching change so dramatically that moral rewards, previously available in ever-changing work, are now inaccessible" (p. 1). Instead, Santoro says that teacher attrition in the current post-NCLB context is a result of teacher demoralization—i.e., teachers are not finding the moral value in their job. Many educators are confronting the moral dilemma of choosing to abandon their commitment to social justice or leave the classroom (Lipman, 2009). "Some of the most

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committed, critical, and culturally relevant teachers" are driven out of low performing schools that house students of color because they were unwilling to comprise their moral beliefs in favor for standardization (Lipman, 2009, p. 370). This is not a new phenomenon; research prior to NCLB found that people entering the teaching profession because of altruistic or service-oriented purposes were more likely to leave the profession (Miech & Elder, 1996). Social justice educators in urban schools within the post-NCLB context are frequently forced with the moral dilemma of compromising their social justice purpose or leave the classroom (Lipman, 2009).

In response to the obstacles to teach for social justice, there is a need to focus on how educators are working to sustain and enhance their practice in urban schools during the post-NCLB era. This dissertation focused on SJEs that were participating in a critical inquiry group. A critical inquiry group is a safe haven for social justice educators to engage in meaningful professional development that involves reflection, theory, dialogue and developing action plans (Duncan-Andrade, 2004; 2005; Nieto, et al., 2002: Picower, 2007). The critical inquiry group in the study, which I will call CIG for the remainder of the paper, brought together educators teaching for social justice across Los Angeles. Six members of the CIG were the chosen as the participants. The purpose of the study was to 1) investigate the impact that a critical inquiry group had on educators' ability to teach for social justice; and 2) examine social justice teaching and practice in urban schools. In the following sections, I will briefly describe the literature review and methods for this study (see chapter two and three, respectively, for more detail).

Theoretical Framework and Relevant Literature

This study combined three bodies of educational scholarship to contextualize social justice teaching in urban schools: 1) social justice education, 2) Paulo Freire and critical pedagogy, and 3) culturally responsive pedagogy. Moreover, two relevant bodies of literature provide insight on how educators are teaching and being supported in the post-NCLB era: equity

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minded teachers navigating standardization and accountability and critical inquiry group research.

Social Justice Education

Social justice education provides an over arching theory and starting point to examine social justice teaching in urban schools. Social justice education has three fundamental principles, equity, access, and social literacy (Ayers, Quinn, & Stovall, 2009). Social justice teaching is an integral component of the broader field of social justice education. Scholars state that the phrase "social justice teaching" serves as an umbrella term that encompasses various theories and pedagogies (Adams, 2007; Chapman & Hobbel, 2010; Picower, 2012). In the study I drew from two of the most prominent social justice theories and pedagogies in urban schools, Paulo Freire and critical pedagogy and culturally responsive pedagogy. These pedagogies were selected because they are most aligned with the above said definition of social justice teaching and provide conceptual and empirical examples of social justice teaching in urban schools.

Paulo Freire and Critical Pedagogy

Critical pedagogy works to "empower teachers and teach for empowerment" by having educators engage in theory and action to address social inequality (Kincheloe, 2008; McLaren, 2007). Critical pedagogy includes various elements, such as: working towards social justice in and out of schools; creating democratic and healing spaces in education; developing conscientization; deconstructing power, privilege and positivistic notions of knowledge; and engaging teachers and students in a praxis of theory and practice (Darder, Baltodano, & Torres, 2009; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Kincheloe, 2008). Throughout the second half of the twentieth century, Paulo Freire was one of the most significant contributors to critical pedagogy (Darder, Baltodano, & Torres, 2009; Kincheloe, 2008). Freire (2003) argues that educators should engage in critical consciousness through a critical pedagogy that is thought provoking,

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dialogical, humanizing, and liberating.

The literature of critical pedagogy in urban schools has produced rich empirical studies that demonstrate the ways that educators work with youth to develop academic and critical literacy, while moving towards action oriented responses to educational and social disparity in their local context (Camangian, 2013; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Seiler, 2001). The field of critical pedagogy contributes rich empirical examples of educators working to engage in social change. Social justice teaching is further enhanced with the addition of culturally responsive pedagogy.

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

Culturally responsive pedagogy broadens the conceptualization and practice of social justice teaching by fore fronting race and culture. Gloria Ladson-Billings and Geneva Gay are two of the most significant contributors to culturally responsive pedagogy. Ladson-Billings explains that culturally relevant teaching develops students scholastically, provides a cultural competence, and a sociopolitical or critical consciousness. In a similar vein, Gay (2000) states that culturally responsive pedagogy "validates, facilitates, liberates, and empowers ethnically diverse students by simultaneously cultivating their cultural integrity, individual abilities, and academic success" (p. 44). These scholars argue that academic achievement is not compromised but enhanced when culture is incorporated in classroom instruction.

Culturally responsive pedagogy in urban schools demonstrates that students of color benefit from instruction that is grounded in students' cultural orientations and in classrooms that feel like home (Howard, 2002; Ware, 2006). Moreover, teachers that employ CRP demonstrate a high level of care and hold high expectations of students. CRP also makes deliberate decisions to examine race and culture in the curriculum in ways that are relevant for students of color (Epstein, Mayorga, & Nelson, 2011; Morrell & Duncan-Andrade, 2002). Thus CRP was integral

to the study because it highlighted teaching that provides the benefit of affirming culture and empowering youth of color, while highlighting effective teaching practice and strategies for academic success in urban schools.

Combining the scholarship of social justice education, Freire and critical pedagogy, and culturally responsive pedagogy provides a theoretical framework for social justice teaching in urban schools. The theoretical framework illuminates how educators rework the classroom to be spaces that are inclusive to the experience of poor and working class students of color, unveiling societal oppression, providing critical dialogue, empowering marginalized youth, caring, and engaging in political development. All of this is done without losing sight of "good teaching" practices and developing students' academic capabilities. The theoretical framework was further supported with relevant and emerging literature that forefronts how equity minded educators navigate and support one another to teach in urban school during the era of standardization, accountability, and privatization.

Equity Minded Teachers Navigating Accountability and Standardization

An emerging and important field to this study was equity minded teachers navigating accountability and standardization. The scholarship in this field provides examples of how educators are navigating the current climate of high stakes testing and NCLB (Picower, 2012; Sleeter & Stillman, 2007; Stillman, 2009). Teachers maneuvering this educational context highlight various strategies that can inform social justice teaching in urban schools. Equity minded teachers are embracing standards but rejecting standardization, working in a collective, and camouflaging social justice teaching (Picower, 2012; Sleeter & Stillman, 2007; Stillman, 2009). More specifically, these studies state that academic standards provide a starting point for developing socially just teaching; however, strict interpretations of standards, mandated text, and narrowed curriculum hamper their teaching.

Teachers navigated standardization and accountability pressures have responded by creatively organizing their curriculum to be meaningful and relevant, promoting a college going environment, and utilizing sociocultural learning theories in their teaching (Sleeter & Stillman, 2007; Stillman, 2009). Lastly, this scholarship highlights that teaching for equity is difficult alone and so many teachers seek and depend on like-minded teacher networks (Picower, 2007; 2012; Stillman, 2009). Picower's (2011) research deliberately used a critical inquiry group model to support social justice educators' navigation of the current context of educational reform. However, critical inquiry groups have also been utilized in various studies to support and improve social justice teaching (Duncan-Andrade, 2007; Nieto, et al., 2002; Picower, 2007).

Critical Inquiry Group

Critical inquiry group research draw from action oriented scholarships, such as, participatory action research, teacher inquiry, and Paulo Freire.   Building from these traditions, a critical inquiry group involves a collective of educators who "work to powerfully address the needs of their students while they engag [e] in their own professional growth" (Duncan-Andrade, 2004, p. 340). Various scholars have explored the utility of critical inquiry groups in urban K-12 schools (Duncan-Andrade; 2005; Nieto, et al., 2002; Picower, 2007; 2012). They illuminate that this space is a safe haven for educators to reflect, dialogue, and work towards social justice teaching. Moreover, teachers involved in critical inquiry groups illuminate that it provides meaningful professional development (Duncan-Andrade, 2004; 2005; 2007).   Critical inquiry groups have also been used as a strategy to support and improve social justice teaching in the post-NCLB era (Nieto, Gordon, & Yearwood, 2002; Picower, 2007). Thus the aforementioned literature informed the research questions and design.

Research Questions

The qualitative research study examined educators' involvement in a critical inquiry group and also investigated the ways that they taught for social justice in urban secondary schools. The study examined the following research questions and sub-questions to understand the above-mentioned phenomenon:

How does participation in a critical inquiry group sustain and enhance social justice teaching in urban secondary schools?

i. In what ways, if any, were participants of a critical inquiry group being supported and working to improve their teaching?

ii. How were participants engaging in social justice teaching within their classrooms?

Methodology

To address the research questions, I drew from two approaches to research, which make up the methodology and research design: 1) qualitative research and case study methodology; and 2) Freirean research and critical inquiry group design.

Qualitative Research and Case Study Methodology

Qualitative research focuses on making meaning of the world based on peoples experience with the world through words and images, rather than numbers (Merriam, 2009). Moreover, qualitative research provides an approach towards research that is contextual, descriptive, inductive, and centers the researcher in the study (Merriam, 2009). For the dissertation, I used a type of qualitative research, specifically a qualitative case study methodology. A case study is "an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a bounded phenomenon such as a program, an institution, a person, or a social unit" (Merriam, 2009, p. X). The case or the bounded phenomenon was a critical inquiry group to social justice educators housed by a teacher activist organization. The participants included six social justice educators

teaching in urban secondary schools, across the teaching experience spectrum. These participants were bounded together through their participation in a critical inquiry group.

Qualitative research is influenced by various theoretical traditions, this inquiry was informed by critical qualitative research—a tradition that critiques and challenges power while working to empower individuals and transform structures (Merriam, 2009). This study drew from the Freirean tradition of research that works to address the material conditions of the participants and broader society throughout the inquiry process

Freirean Research and Critical Inquiry Group Design

Paulo Freire's or Freirean research influences this inquiry; it works to examine a phenomenon while improving the material conditions of the participants (Freire, 1983, 2003, 2005; Freire & Faundez, 1989; Freire & Macedo, 1987). Throughout Freire's scholarship, he actively worked to put into practice his notion of praxis—i.e., process of reflection and action towards liberation (2003). His work inspired other scholars to take a similar stance in their approach to research (Cammarota & Fine, 2008; Paris, 2011; Smith-Maddox & Solorzano, 2002), specifically, the scholarship of critical inquiry groups (Duncan-Andrade, 2004). Jeff Duncan-Andrade explains that the *critical* in critical inquiry group draws from the scholarship of Paulo Freire which includes critical "dialogue, reflection, and praxis" (Duncan-Andrade, 2004, p. 341). In the tradition of Freirean research, I was a participant observer in a critical inquiry group to not only document a phenomenon but also to support and improve teachers' ability to teach for social justice in urban schools.

Design of Study

In designing the research project, I utilized multiple qualitative research methods to examine a critical inquiry group and social justice teaching. Observations, interviews, and document analysis were brought together to engage in triangulation (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003;

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Merriam, 2009). The primary research method was participant-observation. I observed the critical inquiry group meetings and the classrooms of the participants. Secondly, interviews were conducted with participants, both semi-structured and un-structured interviews. Lastly, a document analysis of CIG created materials, teaching documents, and student work.

Throughout the 2014-2015 academic school year I engaged in data collection and analysis simultaneously (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Merriam, 2009). Data collection and analysis for this study occurred in four progressive phases. The first phase explored the CIG structure and engaged in preliminary selection of the participants. Participant observations began in the CIG meetings and CIG documents were analyzed; this process continued throughout the duration of the study. The second phase identified six participants through a unique sample screening and the first set of interviews were conducted. The third phase, investigated social justice teaching through classroom observations, interviews, and analyzing teaching documents. Lastly, the fourth phase examined the CIG's impact on participants teaching through the last set of interviews.

As data was being collected, codes and categories were reworked, developed, and collapsed to understand the way that the CIG supported and improved the participants' ability to teach for social justice. Data analysis began with open coding and then the initial codes, categories, and sub-categories were constructed (Merriam, 2009). Throughout the phases of data collection and analysis, categories moved from numerous categories and then reduced or collapsed into refined categories and subcategories. Coding was further enhanced with use of MAXQDA, a qualitative data analysis software, research inventory data base, and research memos.

Chapter Overview

This study will highlight the ways that social justice educators were collaborating in a critical inquiry group to support and improve their ability to teach for social justice in urban secondary schools. This chapter provided an introduction to the study. The following chapter will further explain the theoretical framework and literature review. As mentioned above, Freire and critical pedagogy, cultural responsive pedagogy, and supporting literature serve as a theoretical framework for social justice teaching in urban schools. Chapter three will explain the methodology, data collection methods, and data analysis. The study utilized a case study methodology and a critical inquiry design to examine a case—critical inquiry group (CIG) and participants—six CIG members.

The following three chapters will include the findings. Chapter four describes the structure of the CIG and how it validated and inspired social justice teaching through a concept that I have termed as a community of transformative praxis. Chapter five will then explain the way the participants displayed trust, vulnerability, and accountability within the CIG, which led to sustaining and enhancing social justice teaching. The last finding chapter focuses on the participants teaching and their classroom practice. All of the participants, regardless of years of teaching experience, employed three characteristics of social justice teaching: 1) providing a humanizing classroom culture, 2) merging academic and critical literacy, and 3) including inquiry and action oriented projects. The paper concludes with a discussion explaining that social justice teaching is a process and is best supported through a community of transformative praxis. In addition implications for teaching, teacher preparation, teacher professional development, and research will be provided in the final chapter.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

In this chapter, I provide a theoretical framework and review the relevant literature on social justice teaching in urban schools in the post-NCLB era. As previously mentioned, the post-NCLB era provides multiple obstacles for social justice teaching in urban schools, such as standardized, narrowed curriculum, and marginalization of equity based pedagogies that leads to teacher demoralization, undermines instruction, forces some to teach in a state of fear, or leave the classroom (Crocco & Costigan, 2007; Milner, 2013; Picower, 2011; Santoro, 2011; Sleeter, 2012; Sleeter & Stillman, 2007; Stillman, 2009). In response to these problems, this dissertation examined how does participation in a critical inquiry group, sustain and enhance social justice teaching in urban secondary schools?

The theoretical framework for this study is informed by three bodies of educational literature that conceptualize social justice teaching in urban schools: 1) social justice education, 2) Paulo Freire and critical pedagogy, and 3) culturally responsive pedagogy. From these theoretical frameworks, I build from the literature review to provide conceptual and empirical examples of social justice teaching that are insightful for urban schools: a) critical pedagogy in urban K-12, b) social justice education and teaching, and c) culturally responsive teaching in urban K-12. Moreover, two emerging fields are included in the literature review to align with the research focus, teachers navigating accountability and standardization and critical inquiry group research (see *Figure 1*).

Figure 1: Theoretical Framework, Literature Review, & Relevant Literature
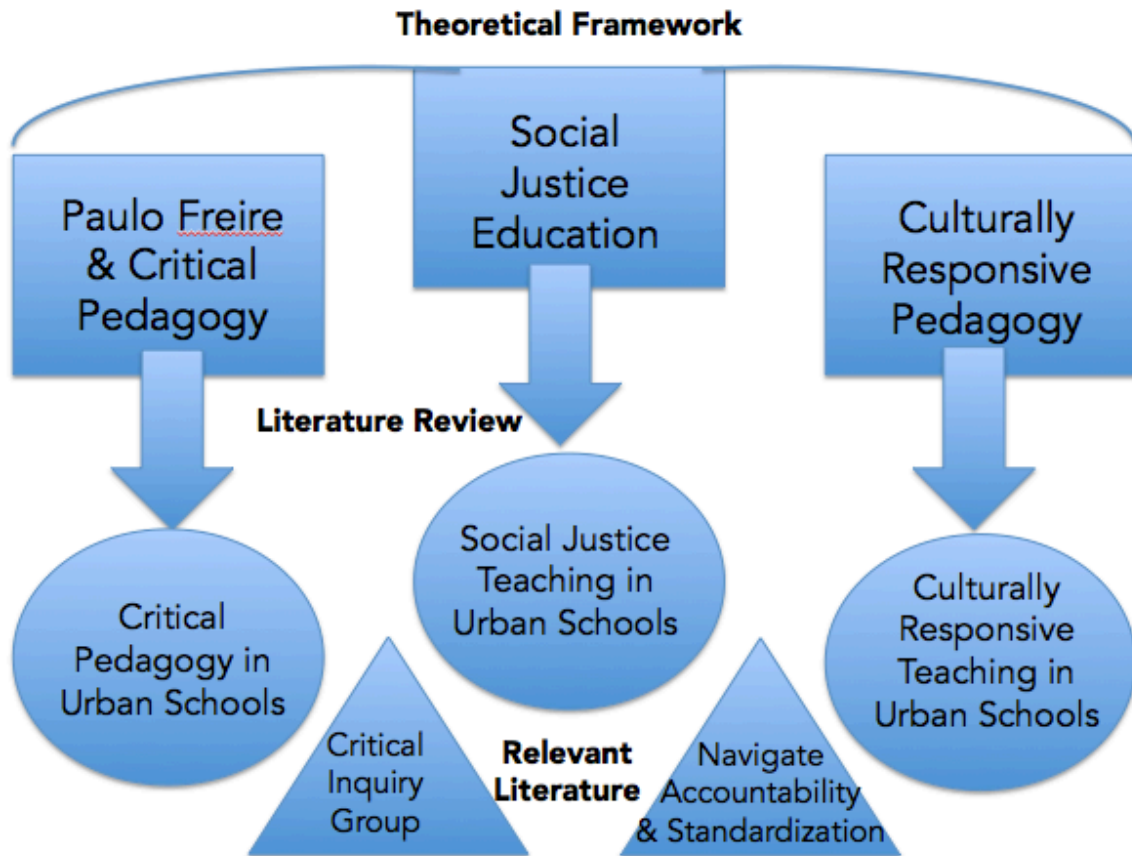
Social justice education provides an overarching theory and a starting point to describe

the elements of social justice teaching and the characteristics of SJEs. The teachings of Paulo

Freire and critical pedagogy and culturally responsive pedagogy further enhance the

understanding of social justice teaching by illuminating the ways that SJEs often organize

curriculum and employ social justice teaching in urban K-12 schools. Moreover, two relevant

bodies of literature aligned with the study's focus on navigating the demands of educational

reform will be reviewed. Equity minded teachers navigating standardization and accountability

and critical inquiry group research describe strategies and supportive networks that assist SJEs to

maneuver the obstacles of urban schools and educational reform. The theoretical framework and

relevant literature provide insightful scholarship to examine how SJEs in urban secondary

schools are navigating the post-NCLB era to teach for social justice.

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What is Social Justice?

In the past several decades, the term "social justice" has gained popularity in education. While many often attribute its roots to the US Civil Rights movement (Grant & Gibson, 2010), its origins reach back to Classical and Middle Age philosophers—e.g., Plato, Thomas Aquinas, Immanuel Kant, etc. (Greene, 1998; Zadja, 2010; Zadja, Majhanovich, & Rust, 2006). During this time, classical and middle age philosophers were exploring individual human rights. However, it was not until 1840 that a Sicilian Jesuit priest, Luigi Taparedli d' Azeglio coined *social justice* to incorporate individual and societal justice (Boyles, Carusi, & Attick, 2009; Zadja et al., 2006). Since then, the definition has evolved and been contested by scholars (Fraser, 1997; North, 2006); yet, most agree that social justice is: "based on the principles of equality and solidarity, that understands and values human rights, and that recognises the dignity of every human being" (Zadja et al., 2006, p. 1).

In practice, social justice has been incorporated in international human rights, anti-imperialist struggles, social movements, federal and state policy, and civil rights movements (Arnove, 2009; Grant & Gibson, 2010; Sleeter, 2010; Zadja, 2010). Today, social justice continues to be employed in various fronts, including education. The following sections will discuss how social justice manifest within education by paying particular attention to teaching in urban K-12 classrooms. This dissertation is grounded in social justice theories, pedagogies, and teaching.

Theoretical Framework

Social Justice in Education

Social justice in education is not a new phenomenon. In the United States, social justice in education extends as far back to the era of slavery, with self-education and literacy movements among African Americans; the *Common School Movement* of the 1830's; twentieth century

thinkers: John Dewey, W.E.B. Dubois, and Carter G. Woodson; and curricular reformist Harold Rugg and George Counts (Banks, 1995; Boyles et al., 2009; Spring, 2013). However, it was not until the 1990's that *social justice education* was recognized and formalized in schools of education. Today *social justice education* is found in university courses and programs, and K-12 teaching, curriculum, and program design (Adams, Bell, & Griffin, 2007; Chapman & Hobbel, 2010; Hackman, 2005).

Ayers, Quinn, & Stovall (2009) state that social justice education has three fundamental principles. The first is *equity*: a demand for the highest possible educational experience for all students, with an emphasis on students of historically marginalized communities. The second principle is *activism*: to incorporate social action into the learning process, when appropriate. Lastly, *social literacy*: an education that works to fully understand the workings of social injustice and provide a "nourishing awareness of our identities and our connection with others," to fight for justice (p. xiv). These principles inform social justice teaching in urban schools.

Social justice teaching in PreK-12 schools. The literature on social justice education, provide a working definition for social justice teaching. For the purpose of this study, social justice teaching is defined as a pedagogical approach in and out of the classroom that works to address systemic inequity through academic and critical literacy, towards social action (Ayers, 1998; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Greene, 1998; Hackman, 2005; Picower, 2012). Greene (1998) explains that social justice teaching works to develop a critical consciousness through a healing curriculum and practice, while striving towards action. Ayers (1998) adds that social justice teaching should deconstruct oppression and tend to student needs. Picower (2012) complements these scholars by illuminating the need for activism, in the classroom and in the streets. These conceptual examples are useful to situate practice-oriented descriptions of social justice teaching.

In *Teaching for Social Justice* (2004) Kohl highlights the importance of being a "good teacher," with his emphasis on *honing your craft* and *utilizing effective teaching practices*. Additionally, he stresses that educators must *protect and nurture themselves.* These elements provide applicable and relevant examples for teacher practitioners. Duncan-Andrade & Morrell (2008) emphasize that social justice teaching does not abandon content standards but enhances learning, through academic and critical literacy. Likewise, Hackman (2005) provides five essential components to teach for social justice. She begins with 1) *content mastery* as a vital component of social justice teaching. Then, she urges educators to provide tools for: 2*) critical thinking,* 3) *action and social change,* and 4) *personal reflection* to make the curricula socially just. Lastly, she argues for 5) an *awareness of multicultural group dynamics* to foster a safe classroom. Combining the conceptual and practical examples of social justice teaching provides insight to the ways that educators can engage in social justice teaching.

In order for educators to engage in social justice teaching there are three attributes I consider to be imperative in their classroom dispositions. First, educators must provide academically rigorous curriculum that deconstructs oppression and empowers marginalized students. Next, educators need to tend to individual student needs, in a nurturing and caring manner. Lastly, educators should engage in activism and provide opportunities for students to alleviate societal oppression (Ayers, 1998; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Greene, 1998; Hackman, 2005; Picower, 2012).

In summary, social justice education and teaching provides the distinct advantage of addressing educational and social disparity through equity driven approaches in and out schools. However, social justice teaching is not widely accepted in education. Ayers, Quinn, and Stovall (2009) remind us that throughout the existence of social justice education and teaching, it has been contested, both in policy and practice. Within teacher education, social justice teaching has

been accused of ignoring traditional education goals, such as, subject content matter and teacher professionalism (Cochran-Smith et al., 2009). While these are valid concerns, the working definition of social justice teaching and the examples of SJEs state that social justice teaching does not ignore traditional educational goals. SJEs are invested in improving their subject matter knowledge and pedagogical strategies (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Morrell & Duncan-Andrade, 2002). However, social justice teaching works to move beyond traditional educational goals and deal with the issue of social and educational injustice in K-12 classrooms. As a result, SJEs are working to better prepare themselves and their students to learn in a meaningful manner.

Another critique, within the scholarship of social justice education is the vague and ambiguousness of the term (Boyles et al., 2009; North, 2006; Zadja, 2010). Scholars within the field, do not agree on a unified definition, for example, there exist internal disagreements between redistributive and recognition theorist (Boyles et al., 2009; North, 2006; Zadja, 2010). Educational scholars have also argued that social justice draws from a limited framework that does not fully acknowledge the legacy of colonialism or capitalism (Tejeda, Espinoza, & Gutierrez, 2003). Without a clear understanding of social justice in education, the practice of social justice teaching can result in dire consequences. Teacher educators and classroom teachers may believe that they are drawing from a social justice framework yet operating with a limited or mistaken teaching stance (Hackman, 2005). In a worst-case scenario, social justice may be misappropriated to engage in self-serving or harmful teaching practices (Butin, 2007). As a result, in this study, I will be drawing from the above said definition of social justice teaching and the charachteristics of SJEs to avoid any confusion of how the study is conceptualizing social justice teaching.

Pedagogies of social justice teaching. Social justice teaching is an umbrella term that encompasses various theories and pedagogies, such as, critical pedagogy, critical race, culturally relevant, decolonizing, ethnic studies, feminist, and social justice pedagogy (Adams, 2007; Chapman & Hobbel, 2010; Picower, 2012). However, I will draw from two of the most prominent social justice theories and pedagogies, related to social justice teaching in urban K-12 schools, 1) Paulo Freire and critical pedagogy and 2) culturally responsive pedagogy. These pedagogies were selected because they are most aligned with the above said definition of social justice teaching and provide conceptual and empirical examples of SJEs working towards social justice and empowerment in urban schools with low income youth of color (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Gay, 2000; Howard, 2010; Milner, 2012).

Critical pedagogy and culturally responsive pedagogy are positioned as two different pedagogies; however, they share some overlapping theoretical and pedagogical influences. Both pedagogies have been cited as drawing from the writings of W.E.B. Dubois, Carter G. Woodson, and Paulo Freire (Banks, 1995; Darder, Baltodano, & Torres, 2009; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Howard, 2010; Kincheloe, 2008; Ladson-Billings, 1995). Moreover, critical pedagogy and culturally responsive pedagogy studies have been conceptualized and infused together in social justice teacher education and classroom teaching (Morrell & Duncan-Andrade, 2002; Stillman, 2009). I do not intend to merge these fields but rather, draw from various elements from each of these pedagogical frameworks to examine how social justice educators are operating in urban schools in the post-NCLB era. Then, I will review the emerging literature of 1) teachers navigating accountability and standardization and 2) critical inquiry group research.

Paulo Freire and Critical Pedagogy

Critical pedagogy draws from the legacy of critical theory, American and international philosophers, and later influenced by the scholarship of Paulo Freire (Darder, Baltodano, &

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Torres, 2009; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Kincheloe, 2008). Critical pedagogy has its roots in critical theory, which emerged prior to World War II (Kincheloe, 2008). Critical theory was introduced by German scholars Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, and Herbert Marcuse, whom were connected to the Institute of Social Research at the University of Frankfurt, also known as the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory (Darder, Baltodano, & Torres, 2009; Kincheloe, 2008; McLaren, 2007). These scholars sought to advance Marxist studies and prominent German philosophers, such as Kant, Hegel, and Weber; while also, incorporating the psychoanalysis work of Marx and Freud (Corradetti, 2011; Kincheloe, 2008; McLaren, 2007).

It is important to note that critical theory is distinct in its epistemology of theory and research. Critical theory contests traditional theory's notion of objectivity in knowledge and truth, instead, it acknowledges that dominant ideology serves a function in society, which maintains systems of power and privilege (Giroux, 2003). As a result, critical theory scholars work to empower the marginalized and work towards eliminating ideological and institutional social inequality (McLaren, 2007). Today, critical theory is continuing to evolve to provide new theoretical insights on the changing nature of society and schools by examining the impact of class, gender, race, ideology, and discourse (Kincheloe, 2008).

Critical pedagogy has also been influenced by various U.S. and international philosophers involved in social justice oriented scholarship and projects. John Dewey, W.E.B. Du Bois, Carter G. Woodson, Franz Fanon, Antonio Gramsci, Myles Horton, and Paulo Freire further pushed critical pedagogy to consider the effects of ideological hegemony, colonialism, racism, and various forms of oppression; while providing concrete examples of liberatory action (Darder, Baltodano, & Torres, 2009; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Kincheloe, 2008). However, during the second half of the twentieth century, Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire's scholarship became one of the most prominent contributors to critical pedagogy (Darder,

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Baltodano, & Torres, 2009; Kincheloe, 2008).

Paulo Freire's scholarship provides educators with a critique of social oppression, a conceptualization for action-oriented pedagogy, and framework to engage in broader liberatory movements (Freire, 1983; 2003; Freire & Macedo, 1987). As previously mentioned, Freire's (2001; 2003) argued that the prevailing *banking model of education* provides students a curriculum that is disconnected from life, mechanical, dehumanizes, and inhibits students from engaging in learning that can lead to self-actualization or transforming society. The banking concept was insightful to this study because it theorizes how scripted, standardized curriculum, and high stakes test are harmful for historically marginalized student. Freire's (2003) analysis of education is part of a larger critique of how society oppresses, maintains oppression, and prevents individuals from transforming their world.

Central to Freire's teaching is having educators deliberately engage students in a process of *conscientização*[5], which awaken an awareness of society's political, economic, and social contradictions—i.e., critical consciousness—in order to engage in personal and social transformation (Freire, 1970, 1998). Additionally, he states that conscientização operates through *praxis*—i.e., a reflexive process of action and reflection towards liberation (2003). Critical pedagogy draws from conscientização and praxis, which are models towards addressing the banking concept of education and transforming society. More specifically, Freire (2003) argues that educators should engage in critical consciousness through a critical pedagogy that is thought provoking, dialogical, humanizing, and liberating. An example of this type of pedagogy is relayed in the concept of *reading the word and the world*—i.e., drawing from students lived realities to engage in academic and critical literacy towards self-actualization and transforming

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5 Conscientização is translated in English as conscientization or critical consciousness. Throughout this document, I will use these terms interchangeably.

society (Freire & Macedo, 1987).

In summary, the legacies of critical theory, radical theorist, and Paulo Freire have influenced the scholarship of critical pedagogy. Critical pedagogy works to "empower teachers and teach for empowerment" by having educators engage in theory and action to address social inequality in and out of the classroom (Kincheloe, 2008; McLaren, 2007). Critical pedagogy involves various elements, such as: working towards social justice in and out of schools; creating democratic and healing spaces in education; developing conscientization; deconstructing power, privilege and positivistic notions of knowledge; and engaging teachers and students in a praxis of theory and practice (Darder, Baltodano, & Torres, 2009; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Kincheloe, 2008). Below, I will review seminal and relevant critical pedagogy scholarship in urban K-12 schools.

Critical pedagogy in urban PreK-12 schools. Critical pedagogy's integration in urban schools provides rich empirical studies of social justice teaching. Various scholars have illuminated that critical pedagogy in urban schools engages students in academic and critical literacy, while moving towards action oriented responses to educational and social disparity (Camangian, 2013; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Seiler, 2001).

To begin, critical pedagogy scholarship has documented how educators engage in academic and critical literacy by utilizing students' voice and narratives to examine their urban schools and social context (Camangian, 2010; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008). Camangian's (2010) study examined his urban high school students' use of *auto-ethnography,* as a strategy, to further students' understanding of self and related it to their social context. It is important to note that the writing and presentations involved in the auto-ethnography lessons were aligned to English/Language Arts state standards. The findings suggest that when students share their narratives through an auto-ethnography, they develop a critical social analysis. Moreover, as

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students unveil their stories, it subsequently resulted in a classroom culture and practice of critical care and empathy. Academic and critical literacy, as displayed in Camangian's study, is a cornerstone in critical pedagogy.

The Art of Critical Pedagogy (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008), one of the most prominent texts of critical pedagogy in urban high schools, describes how educators employ academic and critical literacy, yet also includes examples of students working towards addressing oppression. Duncan-Andrade and Morrell draw from their experience as teacher-researchers to illuminate how they engage their twelve grade English classroom in critical pedagogy. Critical literacy in their classroom was enacted by students tackling seminal British and classical literature, while examining post-colonial and popular cultural text (p. 51). This type of critical literacy provides an opportunity for students to read, understand, and deconstruct the values and ideologies of dominant groups. For example, Duncan-Andrade and Morrell taught a learning segment that paired classical poetry with hip-hop text to analyze literary themes and do a comparative analysis. Additionally, the researchers highlighted a student-initiated action oriented project. The students in the class developed and disseminated a magazine to the school campus to further engage their peers in critical literacy. The magazine highlighted the oppressive conditions in and out of their school, while also providing student narratives and identifying people and local spaces of empowerment.

In addition, scholars have also documented how educators operate outside the confines of the classroom to employ critical pedagogy (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Scorza, Mirra, & Morrell, 2013; Seiler, 2001). Seiler's (2001) study created a science lunch group with African American male students in an urban school. Utilizing a reciprocal teacher-student relationship, the lunch group located science within the students "interest, prior knowledge, and abilities" (p. 1012). The participants developed a student-created curriculum and engaged in learning that

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challenged the stereotypes of black male students within science education. In this study, the researcher felt that it was necessary to create a space out of the classroom, the science lunch group, to further support student learning. Hence, critical pedagogy is not restricted to the classroom. Youth participatory action research (YPAR) is another type of critical pedagogy that demonstrates how educators work in and out of the classroom to engage themselves and students in action-oriented inquiry (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008).

Various YPAR studies inside (Romero et al., 2008) and outside of the classroom (Cahill, Rios-Moore, & Threatts, 2008; Rogers, Morrell, & Enyedy, 2007; Scorza et al., 2013) have documented how YPAR is an extension of critical pedagogy. YPAR works to have youth 1) collectively research a problem, 2) utilize their indigenous knowledge, and 3) work towards taking action (McIntyre, 2000). Rogers, Morrell, and Enyedy (2007) investigated a YPAR project that had high school students engage in a 5-week summer seminar. The YPAR project has students explore the shifts in educational opportunities in Los Angeles schools since the 1954 *Brown v Board of Education* case. Students took on the identity of critical researchers and interviewed community members while also mining through historical archives. The research findings were organized into an action-oriented presentation, which included short-film documentaries to engage an audience of researchers, school stakeholders, and community members. The study suggest that YPAR provides an opportunity for youth to develop academic abilities in math, language arts, and social studies, while taking on the identity of critical researchers. Students underwent an internal transformation while engaging in a social change.

In summary, critical pedagogy provides rich theoretical and empirical examples of how educators are engaging in social justice teaching in urban K-12 schools. Critical pedagogy provides opportunities to engage students in academic and critical literacy in and out of the classroom. In some cases, learning extended beyond the classroom towards action oriented

responses to societal and educational inequity. However, critical pedagogy has also been subject

to criticism.   Educational scholars have argued that critical pedagogy overemphasizes class

struggle and pays insufficient attention to other forms of oppression, such as racism and

misogyny (Ellsworth, 1989; Grande, 2004; Kincheloe, 2008). Additionally, critical pedagogy

been critiqued for its over representation of White males speaking on behalf of the "Other";

embedded with sexism; and utilizes a Western lens (Ellsworth, 1989; Grande, 2004; hooks,

1994; Kincheloe, 2008; Tejeda et al., 2003; Tuck & Yang, 2012).

The critiques of critical pedagogy signal that there is a need for social justice teaching to

move beyond a class analysis and integrate other forms of oppression and theoretical lenses.   It

is for this reason, that critical pedagogy is being combined with social justice education and

culturally responsive pedagogy. In the following section, I will include another pedagogical

approach that forefronts culture and race. I will explain how culturally responsive pedagogy

further broadens the conceptualization and practice of social justice teaching. Theoretical

insights from culturally responsive pedagogy and empirical studies of culturally responsive

teaching in urban K-12 schools enhance the conceptualization of social justice teaching.

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

Culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP) draws from the scholarship of *multicultural*

education and the legacy of *ethnic studies* (Banks, 1995; Grant & Ladson-Billings, 1997). The

Dictionary of Multicultural Education (1997) defines ethnic studies as the study of people of

color from non-dominant cultures in the U.S., with special attention to politically significant

groups (Grant & Ladson-Billings). Moreover, ethnic studies works to provide students of color

access to a quality education, culturally relevant, and participatory learning within their

community (Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2014). Ethnic studies can be traced back to prominent

twentieth century thinkers, such as, W.E.B Du Bois and Carter G. Woodson (Banks, 1995).

These early ethnic studies scholars provide a historical and systemic analysis of the experiences of African Americans in US society and schools. Du Bois (1903) scholarship highlights that African Americans confront internal and institutional barriers. African Americans, according to Du Bois (1903), endure a double-consciousness—i.e., an identity of being Black and American—which distorts their sense of self. Double consciousness leads to internal racism and reinforces institutional racism. Du Bois also critiqued U.S. education, arguing that there is a need to alter *Negro* education to develop a reflective consciousness that empowers African Americans. Additionally, Woodson's (2006) scholarship traces the (mis-) education of African Americans from the era of Reconstruction to the Great Depression. He stated that African Americans had been systematically indoctrinated to believe that their descendants are void of academic or professional contributions to the United States; which organizes education to reinforce ideologies of Black inferiority and White superiority. The seminal writings of Du Bois and Woodson provided a compelling argument for an education that is representative and equitable for historically marginalized racial and ethnic groups, known as ethnic studies.

During the 1960's, ethnic studies gained momentum, scholars, community members, and students pressured university and K-12 schools to provide a curriculum that was representative of the experiences of people of color (Sleeter, 2011; Tintiangco-Cubales et al., 2014). Throughout the Civil Rights movement it became apparent that while ethnic studies was vital, it was not sufficient to address the inequitable schooling conditions affecting students of color, this led to the development of multicultural education (Banks, 1995). *The Handbook of Research on Multicultural Education* provides the following definition for multicultural education: "a field of study designed to increase educational equity for all students that incorporates, for this purpose, content, concepts, principles, theories, and paradigms from history, the social and behavioral sciences, and particularly from ethnic studies and woman studies" (Banks & Banks, 1995).

Moreover, multicultural education, as outlined by James Banks a founding scholar (1995), includes five dimensions: 1) content integration, 2) knowledge construction, 3) equity pedagogy, 4) prejudice reduction, and 5) empowering school culture and social structure. Two of these dimensions are most influential to the formation of culturally responsive pedagogy, *content integration*—i.e., a curricula that draws "from a variety of cultures and groups to illustrate key concepts, principles, generalization, and theories in their subject area or discipline" (Banks, 1995, p. 4)—and *an equity pedagogy*—i.e., "techniques and methods that facilitate the academic achievement of students from diverse racial, ethnic, and social classes" (Banks, 1995, p. 4). The scholarship and activism of ethnic studies and multicultural education is embedded in culturally responsive pedagogy (Banks, 1995; Grant & Ladson-Billings, 1997).

Two of the most significant contributors to the conceptualization of culturally responsive pedagogy are Gloria Ladson-Billings (1995) and Geneva Gay (2000). Drawing from their respective scholarship on *culturally relevant pedagogy* and *culturally responsive teaching* they provide a conceptual framework for culturally responsive pedagogy and teaching. While their works differ slightly, they are complimentary and contribute to the current scholarship on culturally responsive pedagogy. In *Toward a Theory of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy* (1995), Ladson-Billings provided an overview of culture-based instructional approaches, to introduce culturally relevant pedagogy. Through her empirical study of teachers, she explained that culturally relevant teaching develops students scholastically, provides a cultural competence, and a sociopolitical or critical consciousness. In a similar vein, Gay (2000) explained that culturally responsive pedagogy "validates, facilitates, liberates, and empowers ethnically diverse students by simultaneously cultivating their cultural integrity, individual abilities, and academic success" (p. 44). These scholars argued that academic achievement is not compromised but enhanced when culture is incorporated into pedagogical practices.

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In addition, CRP include five key principles, 1) eradicating deficit based notions of students of color, 2) complicating taken-for-granted Eurocentric or middle-class norms, 3) challenging oppression and injustice, 4) infusing authentic and culturally informed notions of care, and 5) drawing from students personal culture to enhance learning (Howard, 2010). In the following section, I will review relevant literature of culturally responsive teaching in urban elementary and secondary schools.

Culturally responsive teaching in urban PreK-12 schools. CRP in urban schools demonstrates that students of color benefit from instruction that is grounded in students' cultural orientations and in classrooms that feel like home (Howard, 2002; 2010). Moreover, teachers that employ CRP demonstrate a high level of care and hold high expectations of students (Ware, 2006). CRP also makes deliberate decisions to integrate race and culture in the curriculum in ways that are relevant for students of color (Epstein, Mayorga, & Nelson, 2011; Morrell & Duncan-Andrade, 2002). Thus CRP was integral to the study because it highlights teaching that provides the benefit of affirming culture and empowering youth of color, while highlighting effective teaching practice and strategies for academic success in urban schools.

Howard's (2002) research on African American student perceptions of effective teaching in urban school revealed that effective teaching was executed through the practice of culturally responsive teaching. The students in the study said that effective teachers made school seem like home; displayed culturally connected caring; and provided verbal communication and affirmation. The study highlights that teaching practices benefit students of color when they are grounded in students' cultural orientations. Moreover, culturally responsive teaching also involves high-level of care and holding high expectations for students of color—i.e., warm demander pedagogy (Ware, 2006). In a study on CRP teachers, Ware (2006) explained that African American students are supported by *warm demander pedagogy*, a component of

culturally responsive pedagogy. The teachers in the study employed a pedagogy that utilized a caring and culturally responsive practice yet upheld an authoritative, no nonsense approach for their students.

In addition to teachers' interaction with students, CRP also makes deliberate decisions to integrate and examine race and culture in the curriculum in ways that are relevant for students of color (Epstein, Mayorga, & Nelson, 2011; Morrell & Duncan-Andrade, 2000). In a secondary social studies class, within a low-income Latino and Black community; Epstein, Mayorga, & Nelson (2011) investigated a teacher's efforts to incorporate historical and contemporary experiences of people of color in the U.S. The teacher centered race and racism, while tending to the intersections of gender and ethnicity in the curriculum. The findings revealed that the teacher provided curriculum that described the dehumanizing experiences of people of color, while also highlighting their resiliency and agency. In another study, Morrell and Duncan-Andrade (2002) focused on integrating a particular component of their urban students culture: hip-hop. The findings displayed that hip-hop music and hip-hop culture serve as a pedagogical tool to promote academic literacy and critical consciousness. Their inquiry found it as an effective tool to tap into students' culture and have them draw meaning from the curricula.

Culturally responsive pedagogy provides the benefit of affirming culture and empowering youth of color, while highlighting effective teaching practice and strategies for academic success. CRP teachers make deliberate decision in the way that they interact with students and organize the curriculum. However, various scholars have also critiqued multicultural education and culturally responsive pedagogy. In the seminal text *Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know* (Hirsch, Kett, & Trefil, 1988) argues that if multicultural education takes a primary role in U.S. education, it could interfere with schools' responsibility in acculturating students to be literate in national culture. In responding to this argument, while, multicultural

education and culturally responsive pedagogy *does* strive for academic literacy, it is epistemologically against acculturating students to be literate in national culture. Instead, multicultural education advocates for transforming the national culture to include an equitable education for students who have been historically denied or subject to discriminatory schooling practices (Banks, 1995; Spring, 2013).

CRP has also received critiques from scholars within the field of social justice education. Critical educators have argued that CRP lacks a theoretical lens to understand the workings of capitalism (Kincheloe, 2008; McLaren, 2007). Moreover, multicultural education and culturally responsive pedagogy have been critiqued for being misconstrued, as teaching about diversity and tolerance (Sleeter, 1996). Both of these claims, while valid or not, affirm the utility of combining social justice education and critical pedagogy with CRP to broaden the conceptualization of social justice teaching.

In summary, the scholarship of social justice education, Freire and critical pedagogy, and culturally responsive pedagogy provides a model for SJEs teaching in urban schools. This theoretical framework illuminates how SJEs rework the classroom to be spaces that are inclusive to the experience of poor and working class students of color, unveiling societal oppression, providing critical dialogue, empowering marginalized youth, caring, and engaging in political development. All of this is done without losing sight of "good teaching" practices and developing students' academic capabilities. Below, I include relevant and emerging literature that forefronts how 1) SJEs are navigating the era of standardization and accountability and 2) supported through a critical inquiry group to teach for social justice in urban school.

Review of Relevant Literature

This study focused on a critical inquiry group's impact on social justice teaching in urban schools during the post-NCLB era. Two relevant fields provide insight on how SJEs in urban

schools are navigating the obstacles of educational reform, teachers navigating accountability and standardization and critical inquiry group research.

Equity Minded Teachers Navigating Accountability and Standardization

An emerging and important field to the study was the inclusion of research on equity minded teachers navigating accountability and standardization. Various studies have shown that mandated curriculum, standardization, and accountability provide a hostile environment that inhibit, undermine, demoralize, and force some equity minded teachers to teach in a state of fear or leave the classroom (Crocco & Costigan, 2007; Picower, 2011; Santoro, 2012; Sleeter & Stillman, 2007; Stillman, 2009). However, teachers navigating this educational context have highlighted various strategies that can inform social justice teaching in urban schools. This section highlight the ways that equity minded teachers were embracing standards but rejecting standardization, working in a collective, and camouflaging social justice teaching (Picower, 2011; Sleeter & Stillman, 2007; Stillman, 2009).

Equity minded teachers utilize academic standards as a starting point for developing socially just teaching; however, strict interpretations of standards, mandated text, and curriculum hamper their teaching (Picower, 2011; Sleeter & Stillman, 2007; Stillman, 2009). As a result, teachers have to be strategic in their teaching (Sleeter & Stillman, 2007). Various studies describe that teachers use mandated curriculum and standards to further engage in social justice teaching and keep their activism under the radar (Picower, 2011; Stillman, 2009). Sleeter and Stillman's (2007) qualitative research interviewed and observed ten classroom teachers' practice in California low performing schools. The study explained that the teachers *utilized standards strategically* and *organizing the curriculum around meaningful ideas that were relevant to students*. Using the standards strategically can be explained as "teachers found space to integrate meaningful, culturally relevant content by studying and prioritizing the standards to decide

which to emphasize and which to deemphasize or even skip" (p. 21). Moreover, teachers also made curricular decisions that, at times, used unconventional approaches to organize the curriculum around more meaningful ideas that were relevant to students. A teacher in the study supplemented a lesson on the Mexican American Revolution and immigration, instead of using a story from the school textbook. The lesson was aligned to a reading/language arts standard emphasizing cause and effect in expository text, yet, also focused on making learning relevant to her mostly Mexican-American students. As a result, student learning was heightened through the strategic use of a relevant theme that tapped into students' prior knowledge.

In another study, Picower (2011) investigated how six first-year teachers learned to teach for social justice in the Neoliberal context. She developed a design-based research project, which involved creating a critical inquiry group for the participants. The teachers explained that they often camouflaged critical pedagogy, yet in some cases, they were able to go public in their social justice teaching efforts. The participants used the mandated curriculum and standards as a starting point to camouflage their pedagogy to further engage in equity and justice related themes. For example, an elementary school teacher, utilized math curriculum and standards— i.e., bar graphs—that seem to be politically neutral to deconstruct gender stereotypes (Picower, 2011). The teacher asked students to list what they thought *boys* like to do and what *girls* like to do in two columns. The students created a list that represented societal gender stereotypes, such as, girls like dolls. In the following lesson, she had the student complete a survey of what they like to do based on the previous lesson's categories. The students disaggregated the data by gender and created bar graphs that dispelled societal gender stereotypes. The teacher in this example used mandated curriculum to camouflage her teaching, however, in some cases it is advantageous to announce social justice teaching.

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A Catholic schoolteacher in Picower's (2011) study was being harassed by a fellow colleague, which forced her to make her teaching public. The teacher's colleague would constantly observe her teaching unannounced and then report her observations to school administration. As a result, the harassed teacher spoke out at a faculty meeting and announced that her social justice teaching is part of her responsibility to be a role model for her students. The teacher's decision to make her teaching public not only halted the harassment but also had her colleagues analyze their own teaching. While this teacher announced her teaching, in another study, *strategic negotiations* were utilized to avoid conflict with local and district administration (Stillman, 2009). A strategic negotiation is a skillful decision-making process that determines when a teacher publicizes his or her equity minded efforts (Stillman, 2009). Within the context of standardization and accountability, SJEs are using the standards strategically, camouflaging their pedagogy, and at times, going public with their social justice teaching efforts.

Lastly, the literature on social justice teaching in the current accountability driven context is reported to be a difficult venture that can be overwhelming for teachers (Stillman, 2009). In Stillman's (2009) study, a key finding from the literature suggest that like-minded teacher networks are vital to support teachers' navigation of the current political climate. In agreement, Picower (2011) study, (as previously mentioned) utilized a critical inquiry group research model to support novice social justice teachers navigate the "Neoliberal context." Her study indicated that the critical inquiry group provided a safe haven for the teachers to uphold their social justice efforts while dealing with the pressure of high stakes testing and mandated curriculum.

The research on equity minded teachers navigating accountability and standardization explain that teachers utilize various strategies to sustain their teaching. For example, teachers

embrace standards but rejecting standardization, camouflage social justice teaching, and at times, work in a collective to navigate the obstacles of educational reform. This emerging field provides keen insight to understand the way educators are teaching for social justice in the post-NCLB era. In the following section, I will further explore the literature of critical inquiry groups in urban K-12 schools.

Critical Inquiry Group Research

Critical inquiry group research draws from the scholarship of participatory action research, teacher inquiry, and Paulo Freire. As previously mentioned, participatory action research is an epistemology towards research that works to involve participants in a collective investigation that shifts who engages in research and constructs knowledge, while moving towards action oriented responses (Fine, 2008; McIntyre, 2000; Morrell, 2006). Participatory action research and teacher inquiry research share certain epistemological and approaches, yet, also have independent characteristics. Teacher inquiry is a "systemic, intentional inquiry by teachers about their own school and classroom work" (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993, pp. 23-24). Teacher inquiry works to identify issues in the classroom and/or schools to then develop action-oriented responses (Cochran-Smith, 1993). There are various different types of collaborative groups that engage in teacher inquiry—e.g., teacher research communities, study practice groups, professional development schools, inquiry groups, and critical inquiry groups (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993, 2009).

Critical inquiry groups are distinct from other forms of teacher inquiry research because it is grounded in social justice and works to engage participants in personal and social transformation. More specifically, the *critical* in critical inquiry group draws from the scholarship of Paulo Freire which extends teacher inquiry to include critical "dialogue, reflection, and praxis" (Duncan-Andrade, 2004, p. 341). Additionally, Freire's scholarship

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serves as an epistemological and methodological guide for critical inquiry group research; since

his research examined a phenomenon while working to improve the material conditions of the

participants involved (Freire, 1983, 2003, 2005; Freire & Macedo, 1987). Building from the rich

traditions of participatory action research, teacher inquiry, and Freire, critical inquiry group is

defined as involving a collective of educators who "work to powerfully address the needs of their

students while they engag [e] in their own professional growth" (Duncan-Andrade, 2004, p.

340).

Various scholars have explored the utility of critical inquiry groups in urban K-12

schools to navigate educational reform (Duncan-Andrade; 2005; Nieto, et al., 2002; Picower,

2007; 2011). As previously mentioned, critical inquiry groups provide a safe haven for

educators to theorize and work towards to reflect, dialogue, and work through the obstacles of

teaching for social justice in urban school (Nieto, et al., 2002; Picower, 2007; 2011). Moreover,

teachers involved in critical inquiry group illuminate that it provides meaningful professional

development that allow them to work in various school contexts (Duncan-Andrade, 2004; 2005;

2007). Critical inquiry groups move beyond the scope of district professional developments to

provide pedagogical and classroom strategies to teach in urban schools (Duncan-Andrade, 2004;

2005). I will further expand on these points in the section below.

Duncan-Andrade's (2007) *Gangsta, Wankstas, and Ridas* is a seminal study on critical

inquiry group research. The study used an action research, which he termed *carino* research, to

examine the successful practices of four urban K-12 teachers participating in a critical inquiry

group. The research design involved three years of data collection that included classroom

observations, critical inquiry group discussions, interviews, and document analysis of teacher

documents and student work. While the study included traditional research methods, it also

sought to "focus on empowering individuals as agents of meaningful, sustainable change" (p.

619). Critical inquiry group research, according to Duncan-Andrade, provides the additional benefit of improving teachers' immediate circumstances to be successful in urban schools (2007).

The study (Duncan-Andrade, 2007) illuminated that all of the educators were *Ridas*, meaning that they were all fully committed to their students, willing to take risk, emotionally attached, and successful with students. Additionally, all teachers practiced the *5 pillars of effective practice in the Ridas' classroom*. These pillars are: (1) critically conscious purpose, (2) duty, (3) preparation, (4) Socratic sensibility, and (5) trust. His research suggests the need for a qualitative based education that raises the human element of educational attainment in an era of quantitative high stakes assessment and discourse. While the Gangsta, Wanksta, and Ridas article discussed teachers' classroom practice, Duncan-Andrade explained in other publications (2004, 2005) that a critical inquiry group approach also provides teachers with meaningful professional development.

The findings from Duncan-Andrade (2004) study explained that critical inquiry group participants "came together around issues of social justice and are using critical social and education theory, to inform their practice" (p. 347). The teachers' participating in the study mentioned that previous experience in school facilitated professional developments, focused on accountability and testing that avoided critical dialogue or planning.   However, the critical inquiry group provided a more relevant professional development. For example, a teacher in the group explained that she was able to reflect and engage in critical dialogue that directly impacted her teaching practice. As a result of the critical inquiry groups, she became more deliberate in developing critical classroom discussion that moved beyond the State standards and connected to students' lives. Thus, Duncan-Andrade's (2004, 2005, 2007) studies not only illuminated the ways that social justice teachers are navigating urban schools and operating within the post

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NCLB educational reform era but they also provide teachers with a space to further develop their pedagogical practice. Various other studies also utilized a critical inquiry group design to support teachers in urban schools and navigate the post-NCLB era (Nieto, 2003; Nieto et al., 2002; Picower, 2007, 2011).

Nieto, Gordon, and Yearwood's (2002) study examined *what keeps teachers going* during the "mean spirited" context for teachers. The study emphasized that critical inquiry groups provide a humanizing place for educators to continue their work in urban schools within. The inquiry group provides an outlet for teachers that are hampered down by the demands of educational reform. Through the inquiry group, teachers were able to engage in professional and intellectual efforts to improve their teaching. The critical inquiry group provided support for veteran teachers to *keep going*. Picower's (2007) study, also found that critical inquiry group research supports new educators, to teach for social justice.

First year teachers in Picower's (2007) study said that they struggled with the pressures of being new to the profession, mandated curriculum, high stakes testing, and aligning their social justice teaching beliefs to classroom practice. However, the teachers' involvement in a critical inquiry group relieved some of the above said pressure and provided a space for them to move forward. The teachers mentioned that the group shared a collective purpose to teach for social justice; this purpose developed a sense of accountability and motivation. A teacher in the study explains, "there is an element of accountability that this group creates and it has been a necessary factor in completing the extra work and thought it takes to truly extend my teaching" (p. 9).

The critical inquiry group validated teachers' social justice beliefs and curricular development that was not being valuing or occurring at their school sites (Picower, 2007). The critical inquiry group enhanced teachers' instruction by pooling together participants resources to

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develop rich lessons and instruction. During a critical inquiry group meeting, the participants brought in various poetry books from Dominican and Asian poets to add to teacher's poetry unit. The teacher mentioned that without the support of the critical inquiry group; she would not of been able to develop a unit that covered such a diverse range of poetry.

Critical inquiry group research highlights effective teaching practices, strategies for sustainability, meaningful professional development, and pooling of resources to teach for social justice. However, most of the research on critical inquiry group investigates how teachers discuss their teaching without examining teaching practice (Nieto, 2003; Picower, 2007; 2011). As a result, I pose the question how do we know that teacher's involvement in a critical inquiry group impacts their classroom practice? This study was designed to examine the critical inquiry group space and then follow teachers into their classrooms.   In addition, this study was also distinct because it focused on a teacher-led critical inquiry group. All of the afore mentioned research on critical inquiry studies involve a research facilitated and creating this space. This study examined a teacher-led inquiry group and it's impact on social justice teaching.

In conclusion, this study provided a theoretical framework, empirical research, and relevant literature for social justice teaching in urban schools, which was utilized to examine how SJEs in a teacher-led critical inquiry group were working to sustain and enhance their practice in urban secondary schools. The following chapter will describe research methodology, data collection methods and data analysis.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology and Methods

The post-NCLB era provides multiple obstacles for social justice teaching in urban schools, such as, standardized, narrowing of curriculum, marginalization of equity based pedagogies that leads to teacher demoralization, undermines instruction, and forces some to teach in a state of fear, or leave the classroom (Crocco & Costigan, 2007; Milner, 2013; Picower, 2011; Santoro, 2011; Sleeter, 2012; Sleeter & Stillman, 2007; Stillman, 2009). In response to the above-mentioned issues impacting social justice teaching, this study examined how does a critical inquiry group, sustain and enhance educators' ability to teach for social justice in urban secondary schools? The chapter is split into two sections. The first describes research methodology, the second, focuses on data collection methods and analysis. I will begin by describing the research methodology and design that influenced data collection methods and data analysis.

Research Methodology

Research Methodology and Design

This study is guided by two approaches to research, which make up the methodology and research design: 1) qualitative research and case study methodology; and 2) Freirean research and critical inquiry group design (see *Figure 2*). To begin, the study used a qualitative research methodology. Qualitative research focuses on making meaning of the world based on peoples experience with the world (Merriam, 2009). Freirean research engages in rigorous research that works to improve the material conditions of the participants and broader society. Below, I will further explain each research tradition individually then explain how they work together to inform the study.

Figure 2: Research Methodology & Design

Qualitiative Research and Case Study Methdology

Freirean Research and Critical Inquiry Group Design

Examining the impact of a Critical Inquiry Group on Social Justice Teaching
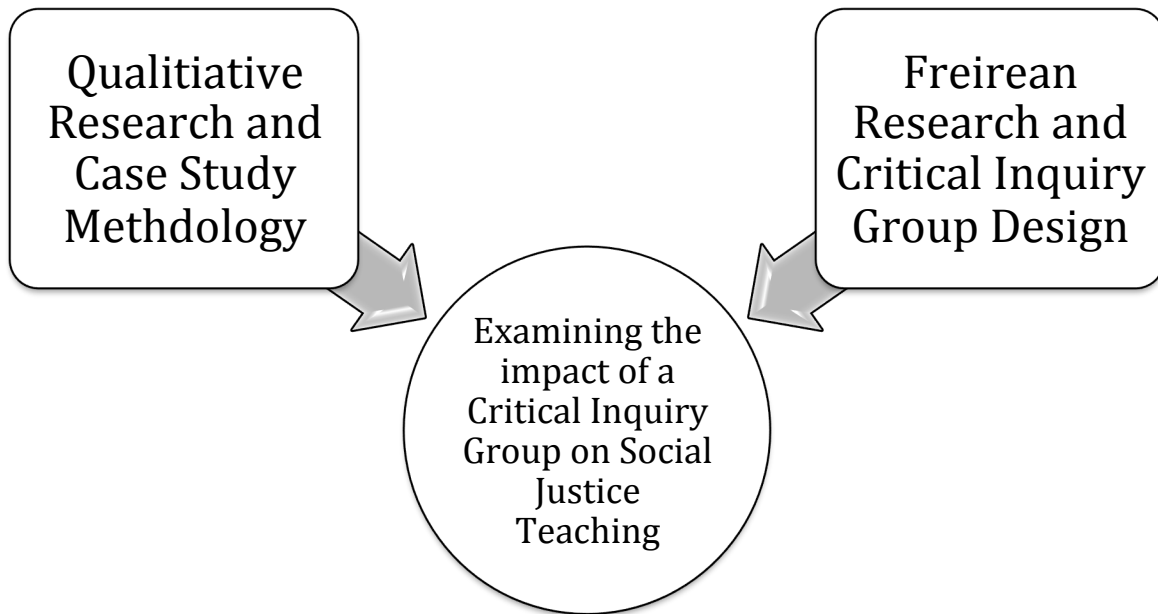
Qualitative Research and Case Study Methodology

Qualitative research. Qualitative research is "interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world" (Merriam, 2009, p. 13). According to Merriam (2009), qualitative research includes four key characteristics. First, the focus on how people make "*meaning and understand*" a phenomenon. Second, the "*researcher is the primary instrument*" for collecting and analyzing data. Third, qualitative research is an "*inductive*" *process* that does not test hypothesis but builds concepts, hypothesis, or theories. Lastly, this approach includes a "*rich description*" of data through words and pictures, instead of numbers. The four key characteristics of qualitative research explain that it is contextual, descriptive, inductive, and centers the researcher in the study. Thus qualitative research informs the study. However, my approach to research was also shaped by a specific theoretical tradition in qualitative research.

Various theoretical traditions guide qualitative research, such as positivist, constructivist, critical, postmodern, etc. This study drew from the legacy of critical qualitative research.

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Critical research is rooted in efforts to "critique and challenge, to transform and empower" and often associated with critical theorist, such as, Karl Marx, Jurgen Habermas, and Paulo Freire (Merriam, 2009, p. 34). Critical qualitative research works to critique and challenge power, while working to empower individuals and transform structures (Merriam, 2009). In the following sections, I will explain how I drew from the tradition of critical research.

In summary, the study was informed by qualitative research methodology and shaped by the tradition of critical qualitative research. Moreover, the dissertation, gathered data through qualitative research tools, such as, participant observations, interviews, and document analysis (section two of this chapter, will further explain research methods).

Qualitative case study methodology. This study utilized a qualitative case study approach, which is "an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a bounded phenomenon such as a program, an institution, a person, or a social unit" (Merriam, 2009, p. X). Case study provides the advantage of focusing on 'real-life' context, through a thick description of the case (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2006). The bounded phenomenon, also known as the case, is something that you can "fence in" and clearly define the boundaries of what is being studied (Merriam, 2009). The unit of analysis is the case, it "is a noun, a thing, an entity; it is seldom a verb, a particle, a functioning" (Stake, 2006, p. 1). The defining characteristics of case studies include, being particularistic—focusing in on a particular situation, event, program, or phenomenon; descriptive—thick description of the bounded phenomenon, and heuristic—illuminates new meaning about the phenomenon (Merriam, 2009). Moreover, case study research provides the opportunity of drawing from multiple sources of data, such as observations, interviews, and document analysis towards the triangulation of data (Yin, 2009).

The study utilized an observational case study design (Merriam, 2009) to examine the teaching of social justice educators that are participating in a critical inquiry group. Observation

case studies, are a type of case study that primarily gather data from participant observations, along with interview and document data, these studies tend to focus on an organization or part of an organization (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). The researcher is able to engage in the natural setting, while simultaneously being a participant and observer (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Merriam, 2009). As a participant observer, special attention is paid to ensure that participation in the organizations activities does not draw the researcher away from the foci of the study (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). In this study, I utilized a participant observation approach and stance, at times, I was a participant as observer—participation in activity was fore-fronted—while at other times, I was an observer as participant—participation was secondary to collecting data (Merriam, 2009). I will further explain how I navigated these two participant observation approaches in the following methods section.

In summary, this study is influenced by qualitative research and case research methodology. However, the study is also guided by a specific qualitative research tradition, critical research. In the section below, I will further explain a critical research approach, Freirean research. Freirean research engages in rigorous inquiry while working to improve the material conditions of the participants and broader society.

Freirean Research and Critical Inquiry Group Design

Paulo Freire (Freire, 1983, 2003, 2005; Freire & Faundez, 1989; Freire & Macedo, 1987) has been insightful to theory and pedagogy; however, his approach towards research also deserves some attention. It is important to begin by stating that Freire's scholarship embodied the notion of praxis—i.e., working towards liberation through reflection and action (2003). By stating this upfront, then, we can better understand that his research not only documented a phenomenon but worked towards the goal of improving the lives of those involved in his work. In *Learning to Question* (Freire & Faundez, 1989), Freire provides insight into his approach

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towards research. In this text, he states that his work works to "have practical political-pedagogical work and research" (p. 12). More specifically, Freire sought to achieve this goal by extending his notion of praxis in the way he engaged in research (2003). For example he stated, "what I am concerned above all to do is to resist, theoretically and practically, two connections which are generally made, although not always explicitly" (Freire & Faundez, 1989, p.33). Thus, a Freirean approach towards research works to examine a phenomenon while improving the material conditions of the participants involved through praxis. Moreover, Freire's research has also impacted the way individuals engage in research (Paris, 2011; Smith-Maddox & Solórzano, 2002) and design critical research projects, such as participatory action research and critical inquiry groups (Cammarota & Fine, 2008; Duncan-Andrade, 2004). In the section below, I will overview critical inquiry group research design and its use in the dissertation.

Critical inquiry group design. As previously mentioned, the *critical* in critical inquiry group draws from the scholarship of Paulo Freire which includes critical "dialogue, reflection, and praxis" (Duncan-Andrade, 2004, p. 341). Critical inquiry group is defined as involving a collective of educators who "work to powerfully address the needs of their students while they engag [e] in their own professional growth" (Duncan-Andrade, 2004, p. 340). In the literature review (chapter two), I explained that a critical inquiry group research design: 1) provides a safe haven for educators to theorize and work to reflect, dialogue, and problem-pose; 2) involves participants in meaningful professional development; and 3) provide pedagogical and classroom strategies that allows social justice educators to teach for social justice in various school contexts.

In this dissertation, I examined how social justice educators participate in a critical inquiry group, specifically, the way that a critical inquiry group impacted their ability to teach for social justice. In a Freirean tradition, I was a participant observer that collected data yet also

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worked to support and improve the conditions of the teachers in the critical inquiry group and their classroom. In the following section I will further explain my participatory role in the inquiry group. This study has been distinctly influenced by the Freirean research tradition of supporting teachers throughout the research process. More specifically, a critical inquiry design provided the ideal setting to engage in research while working alongside educators to improve their teaching in urban schools.

Data Collection Methods and Analysis

Data collection methods and analysis built from the previously described research methodology and design. I employed traditional qualitative research methods, such as interviews, classroom observations, as well as document analysis; and distinctive research approaches, such as participatory observations, and a critical inquiry group design. Throughout the 2014-15 school year, I was a participant observer in a critical inquiry group being facilitated by a local teacher activist organization-All Power to the People (APP6). I selected a unique sample of educators, teaching in urban schools and who were also participating in the critical inquiry group. I then followed these educators into their classroom to examine how they were teaching for social justice. In this section, I will explain sampling participants, data collection, and data analysis.

Sampling

The study focused on six educators, also referred to as the participants, who were teaching in urban secondary schools (grades 7-12). The participants were bounded by their participation in a critical inquiry group in Los Angeles. I was interested in a distinct type of teacher, a social justice educator teaching in urban secondary schools that was participating in a

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6 All Power to the People is a pseudonym for the teacher activist organization

critical inquiry group. As a result, I used a unique purposeful sampling method. A purposeful

sample "is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain

insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned" (Merriam, 2009,

p. 77). More specifically, in my study, I used a unique purposeful sample due to the "unique,

atypical, and rare attributes" (p. 78) of the teachers' social justice characteristics, school sites,

and involvement in a critical inquiry group (Merriam, 2009).

In purposeful sampling it is necessary to create a sample criteria that is essential to the

study and then find a unit that meets the criteria (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). The criteria "for

purposeful sampling directly reflect the purpose of the study and guide in the identification of

information-rich cases. You not only spell out the criteria you will use, but you say why the

criteria are important" (Merriam, 2009, p. 77-8). Two criteria charts were provided to explain

the essential and desired traits for the cases. *Table 1* provides the essential traits that all

participants had to meet. For this study, there were three essential criteria for selecting the

participants. All of the participants met the following criteria: taught for social justice at an

urban school and were active participant in a critical inquiry group. A detailed sample criteria

chart is provided below.

Table 1: Essential Participant Sample Criteria and Rationale

Participant Criteria	Rationale
Engaged in social justice teaching (All) • Merges academic and critical literacy • Develops caring relationships with students • Teaching extends beyond the classroom/ activism	The literature describes social justice teaching as: 1) providing academically rigorous curriculum that deconstructs oppression and empowers marginalized students; 2) tends to individual student needs, in a nurturing and caring manner; and 3) engages in activism (Ayers, 1998; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Greene, 1998; Hackman, 2005; Picower, 2012).
Taught in an urban-intensive public K-12 school that had a student body of predominately low-income students of color. The school could be traditional, pilot, charter, or an alternative school.	These schools are most likely to be impacted by post-NCLB efforts, such as school restructuring, mandated curriculum, and rigid content standards (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Johnson, 2012; Milner, 2012; 2013). Additionally, there is a high teacher turnover rate and various stressors associated with teaching in the post-NCLB era (Anyon, 1997; Duncan-Andrade, 2007; Nieto, 2003).
Actively participated in a critical inquiry group. Attended most of the critical inquiry group meetings during the 2014-2015 academic year.	As previously mentioned, a critical inquiry group research design supports educators while collecting rich data. Critical inquiry groups provide a safe haven for critical educators to engage in meaningful dialogue, professional development, share resources and develop action plans (Duncan-Andrade, 2007; Nieto, et al., 2002; Picower, 2007).

In addition to the essential participant sample criteria, I also sought to have desired traits that were not necessary for participation but provided a diverse sample. Desired traits involved diversity in relation to teachers' content area, years of teaching experience, race/ethnicity and gender (see *Table 2*, below).

Table 2: Desired Participant Sample Criteria and Rationale

Participant Criteria	Rationale
Taught one of the following single subject areas: math, science, English, history, or an elective.	Limited studies (Duncan-Andrade, 2007; Howard, 2010) have examined social justice teaching in multiple discipline content areas. The study was interested in examining how social justice teaching occurs in various disciplines, specifically core subject areas. I sought to have one teacher in each of the core content areas and an elective.
Diversity among years of teaching experience, at least one participant that was is in their first year, taught between 2-5 years, and 5 or more years.	The literature on equity minded teachers navigating accountability and standardization explains that teachers' years of experience impacts their ability to navigate the post-NCLB era (Picower, 2011; Sleeter & Stillman, 2007). I sought to have at least one teacher that is a novice, novice to experienced, and experienced teacher.
Racial and gender diversity.	I was seeking some parity between ethnic/racial and gender diversity.

Selecting the Case and Participants. The case study and participant screening process involved inquiring with institutions, people, and reviewing documents (Yin, 2006). In my search, I contacted a local social justice themed teacher education program, school administrators, classroom teachers, and teacher activist networks to find a critical inquiry group that had membership of the essential participant sample criteria. Prior to doing the search, I became aware of a social justice themed critical inquiry group that was being housed within the teacher activist organization, which I was a member, All Power to the People (APP). Before, exploring this option I decided to do a general search of social justice critical inquiry groups throughout Los Angeles County.

During recruitment, I asked the above-mentioned contacts if they could identify a social justice themed critical inquiry groups. Moreover, I also emphasized that I was not interested in university operated inquiry groups for new teachers (most common type of teacher inquiry groups), instead I was seeking both pre- and in-service teachers. Various teacher-based

organizations were mentioned, yet two critical inquiry groups were consistently cited. The first was a critical inquiry group that was part of a statewide coalition of teacher activists, and the second, the critical inquiry group housed by APP. In contacting the first critical inquiry group, I was told that it had a long history but was no longer operating. The contact informed me that the organization was at its capacity and was not able to keep the group running. Lastly I turn my attention to the second critical inquiry group, which I will call name "CIG" for the remainder of the study.

Case: CIG. The critical inquiry group is housed within APP, a social justice teacher activist organization located in Los Angeles that draws from a decolonizing framework (Tejeda et al., 2003; Tuck & Yang, 2012). Most APP members are educators of color that are teaching throughout the city of Los Angeles. APP has three main components: 1) community organizing, connecting the organization with external and internal community organizing campaigns; 2) health and wellness, providing the members with wellness activities and resources that work to provide balance; and 3) education, political and pedagogical education that supports teachers political development and teaching practice. The critical inquiry group is located within the educational committee.

The CIG was created by the parent organization (APP) to support teachers engaging in social justice in and out of the classroom. Similar to APP, it drew from a decolonizing framework to support teachers' teaching and classroom practice. The CIG had a coordinator that was voted on by APP and was in charge of facilitating the meeting. While the CIG was part of the parent activist organization, it did have some autonomy. For example, membership in the teacher activist organization was not necessary to participate in the CIG. The CIG was a teacher led space and open to all.

Most of all of CIG activities occurred in during monthly meetings. Meetings occurred every fourth Saturday of the month at a local community center. Meetings were two hours and followed the academic calendar, which was the length of the study. CIG meeting included discussing critical texts, sharing of curriculum, and developing plans of actions. There were twenty-five individuals that participated in the CIG, which I will call members. Most members were secondary teachers in Los Angeles, although there were also elementary school teachers, a school administrator, a teacher union organizer, and undergraduate and graduate students that participated in the CIG.

To conduct the study, I first met with the APP's leadership council and proposed my research. I position myself as a research ally that was willing to provide a connection to university resources and support the CIG and its members throughout the research process. In the meeting, I also passed out a research proposal (see *Appendix 1*) and answered any questions. The leadership council voted and agreed for me to conduct the study. I also proposed my research to the CIG coordinator and membership and underwent the same process. The participants agreed and I began collecting data on the first CIG meeting of the school year.

Selecting Participants. Selecting participants began during the first few months of the study. During CIG meetings, I observed dialogue, curriculum presentations, and asked informal questions to see if the CIG members fit the essential participant sample criteria traits. Afterwards, I created a list of possible participants and met with the CIG coordinator. The CIG coordinator was knowledgeable of the membership and assisted in selecting participants. I met with him in December and reviewed the sample criteria. I shared a list of potential participants and asked his input. We reviewed the list and the sample criteria to assess which teachers would be appropriate candidates for the study.

Nine potential participants were identified. I met with each person individually to explain the study and review the criteria chart. After the conversation, I scheduled classroom observations and had a follow up conversation with each teacher. It deliberately included classroom observations in the screening process to ensure that the teacher's practice matched the way they described their teaching. After the classroom observation, I asked follow up questions to ensure that they met the essential sample criteria. At the end of the screen process, six participants fit the essential participant sample criteria and agreed to participate in the study.

Participants. The case study had six participants that came from the critical inquiry group. All of the teachers met the study's sample criteria chart and most of the features were met in the desired sample criteria chart. The participants included two high school teachers in their first year; two high school teachers in their third year; and one middle school teachers with seven years of teaching experience and a high school teacher with nine years of teaching experience. Below, are the profiles of each teacher with brief background information (see *Table 3*).

Table 3: Study Participants

Participant7	Sex/Gender	Race/Ethnicity	Year of Teaching	Type of School	Content Subject
Mika Yildirim	Female	Asian/Middle Eastern	1st	Public High School	Social Studies
Dan Tran	Male	Asian American	1st	Public High School	English
Lucia Montejano	Female	Salvadoran American	3rd	Environmental Charter HS	Spanish
Omara Zavala	Female	Mexican American	3rd	Environmental Charter HS	English
Clyde Jenkins	Male	White	7th	Corporate Charter MS	Art & Literacy
Robert Morales	Male	Chicano	9th	Corporate Charter HS	Ethnic Studies

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7 All participant names are pseudonyms.

Mika and Dan were both in their first year of teaching and also enrolled in a social justice themed teacher education program at a local university.   They were the only participants teaching at a traditional public high school.   For several years, the local school district had faced budgetary issues and as a result, instituted a hiring freeze for new teachers and also had a reduction in force notice (pink slips) for in-service teachers.   Mika and Dan were part of the first large wave of teachers to be hired since 2009.   The rest of the participants taught at charter schools.

Mika Yildirim.   Mika attended low-income public schools and grew up in a working and middle class community in Southern California. In college, she studied art and had an interest in art education. It was at this time that she re-connected with her Turkish and Muslim upbringing and became involved in Muslim-based student activism. During college, she also worked for a college access program that provided tutoring and mentorship for low-income students of color in urban secondary schools.

After graduation, she began exploring the possibility of becoming a teacher and as a result joined APP's critical inquiry group and has been a member for over two years. At the time of the study, she was a first year teacher, at a high school that had a high rate of students commuting to the campus because of the school's reputation as being a safer city-school option and competitive athletic program.   In addition, the local community had undergone aggressive gentrification. As a result, some of her students grew up in the community but had been pushed out yet were still commuting to the school.   She taught U.S. Government and World history.

Dan Tran. At an early age Dan knew he wanted to be a teacher. Both of his parents were teachers in Vietnam and would tell him stories of their classrooms. Beginning in high school, Dan began working with students in secondary classroom as a tutor and teacher. He later participated in a summer teaching internships that had him teaching middle school students. In

college, he continued to teach during the summer and also tutored and mentored youth throughout the school year. As a college student he took Ethnic Studies courses and become involved with critical Asian-American student organizations that heightened his understanding of educational inequity.

In Dan's first year of his teacher education program, he was looking for a more critical support network and was recommended to attend a CIG meeting. He has been a member for over a year. Dan's teaching context was challenging, he taught at a high school that was one of the lowest performing and toughest schools to staff in the district. As a 10th grade English teacher, he had to dedicate a significant amount of instructional time preparing students for the state's high school graduation exam.

The following teachers, Lucia and Omara had a few more years of teaching experience. They both taught at the same environmental charter school, which also had a social justice focus. The school had limited classrooms; as a result they shared the same classroom and taught during each other's conference (non-teaching) period. Omara taught all her courses in the same class, while, Lucia taught the rest of her courses in another teacher's classroom.

Lucia Montejano. Lucia grew up in the local community and attended the school that she currently teaches at. At that same school, she realized that she wanted to be a Spanish teacher. She was taking an AP Spanish course and her teacher, who was also Central American, taught her that she should be proud of her Salvadoran culture and exposed her to Latina/o writers that allowed her see her community as intellectuals. In addition, in college she was involved in student activism, which she described as a "coming to consciousness." In the activist organization, they read critical and de-colonial text and she developed strong relationships with her fellow activists. She joined the CIG because she wanted to continue to read critical text and organize with like-minded folks.

After graduating college, Lucia intentionally returned to her community to become a Spanish teacher. She contacted her old school and worked a year as a special education teaching assistant. The following year she became the school's Spanish teacher and has taught there for the last three years. She taught Spanish for native and non-native Spanish speakers.

Omara Zavala. Omara grew up in an unstable home. As a youth, her teachers would often provide her guidance and at times a parental role that supported her throughout here elementary and secondary education. As a result she gained an appreciation for teachers and understood how a teacher could positively impact youth. At the end of college, she attended a summer program designed to prepare future teachers of color. The program had the students read critical theory and also provided mentorship from critical educators of color. In addition, during her teacher education program, she also received mentorship from a "radial educator" that further supported her desire to engage in liberatory education.

Omara taught at two schools before arriving at the school. Her first teaching assignment was at a middle school that required her to teach various preps, yet did not provide her sufficient support. After leaving the school, she taught for a year at a culturally relevant themed elementary school until the school was closed down. The previous year, she started at the environmental school and taught a college prep course. At the time of the study, she was teaching 11th grade English. As a result, every year she has taught a different subject. She joined the CIG because she felt isolated at her school and wanted to interact with people whom she was politically aligned and could support her development as an educator, similar to her teacher training.

The next participants, Clyde and Robert are the two most experienced teachers in the critical inquiry group and were also the current and former CIG coordinator (respectively), at the time of the study. They both described their school site as belonging to a corporate charter

school network. Both schools follow the trend of corporate managed charter schools that prioritize high stakes tests, merit base or performance pay for teachers, and limited local-community accountability.

Clyde Jenkins. Clyde grew up in a White middle class community and attended similar schools. He first became interested in teaching as a result of the teaching and mentorship he received from his high school Art teacher.   As an art student, he was stimulated by the curriculum and quickly excelled in it. His teacher pushed him to develop artistically, academically, and morally. He would spend his free time in high school creating murals and attending artistic events with his teacher. Later, in college he studied art and became involved in student activism and community organizing. Clyde was also involved in the same activist organization as Lucia and is married to Lucia's older sister. During his time in college, he helped organize the creation of an Ethnic Studies department at his university. At the end of college, he realized that he wanted to combine his love for art and community organizing.

Clyde was in his third teaching assignment, at the time of the study. He previously taught in Northern California, he first taught in a predominately White middle class school and then made the conscious decision to teach at a low-income school with students of color. For the past two years, he had taught Art in Los Angeles at the corporate charter middle school. When he moved to Los Angeles he began to be involved with APP and the CIG. At the time of the study, he was the coordinator for the critical inquiry group and been a member for two years.

Robert. Robert grew up in progressive education household; both of Robert's parents had been involved in urban education for over 30 years.   He witnessed his parents engage in equity-oriented teaching and initiatives as teachers and later as school principals (respectively) in low-income Latino schools. Later in college, he studies Chicana/o Studies and became involved in student activism that ranged from hosting Chicano poetry and film events to organizing with

Immigrations Rights campaigns.   When he was graduating, he wanted to move to Los Angeles

and work with Chicano youth, so he decided to become a teacher.

Robert is the most experienced teacher and had spent seven of his nine years teaching at

the school. The school is located in one of the most poverty stricken areas of the city.   He was

attracted to the school because it provided him the opportunity to teach ethnic studies.   Robert is

trained as an English teacher but teaches 9th and 12th grade Ethnic Studies. He is also a founding

member of APP and the critical inquiry group. He was the prior CIG coordinator.

Researcher's role. My experiences as a current member of APP, prior teaching

experience in urban schools, and participation in another CIG provided me the opportunity to

research and support the CIG. In my interactions with CIG members, I shared experiences and

pedagogical strategies as a former classroom teacher and teacher educator. As a result, I took on

the unique role as an indigenous-insider researcher. Banks (2006) explains that indigenous

insider positionality occurs when an individual "endorses the unique values, perspectives,

behaviors, beliefs, and knowledge of his or her indigenous community and culture and is

perceived by people within the community as a legitimate community member" (p. 778).   My

shared commitment to social justice teaching and involvement in community organizing with the

CIG members provided me the unique opportunity to develop rapport and gather rich data. My

indigenous-insider positionality allowed for CIG members to continue participating in the CIG

without disrupting the natural setting (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). Lastly, my participation in the

CIG was aligned to the Freirean research tradition of supporting individuals in the research

process, specifically, educators' ability to teach for social justice in urban schools.

Data Collection Methods

In this sub-section, I will explain the tools that were used for data collection. While data

collection and analysis occurred simultaneously (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Merriam, 2009), in

this paper, I separate them into two subsections to assist the reader in understanding each approach in detail. Data analysis will be discussed in the next sub-section. This study used three data gathering tools to examine the impact of a critical inquiry group on social justice teaching. The main research method was participant observation; I observed critical inquiry group meetings and the classrooms of the participants. Secondly, interviews were conducted with participants, both semi-structured and un-structured interviews. Lastly, a document analysis of CIG created materials, teacher and teaching documents, and student work.

Data collection occurred in four phases (see *Table 4*), first phase, explored the CIG and participants—participant observation of CIG meetings, preliminary selection of participants, and document analysis; second phase, included identifying participants and social justice teaching— continued participant observation of CIG, selected participants, conducted initial interview, and document analysis; third phase, analyzing social justice teaching—continued participant observation of CIG, conducted classroom observations, second interview, and document analysis; and fourth phase, examining CIG's impact on participants teaching—continued observation of CIG, final interview, and document analysis. More detail on the phases of data collection and analysis is provided in the data analysis sub-section.

Table 4: Phases of Data Collection and Analysis

Phase	Data Collection and Analysis
1) Exploring the CIG & participants	-Participant observation and audio recording of CIG meetings -Document analysis of teacher activist organization -Preliminary selection of case study participants
2) Identifying participants and social justice teaching	-Participant observation and audio recording of CIG meetings -Met with CIG coordinator to select CIG members that fit the participant criteria chart. -Recruited participants -1st Interview with participants -Document Analysis
3) Analyzing social justice teaching	-Participant observations and audio recording of CIG meetings -Participant observations of participants classrooms -2nd interview with participants -Document analysis
4) Examining CIG's impact on teaching	-Participant observations and audio recording of CIG meetings -3rd interview with participants -Document analysis

Moreover, data collection methods—i.e., observations, interviews, and document analysis—were chosen to address research questions. *Table 5* below aligned research questions to data collection methods. This table provided an illustration of how I addressed the research question and sub-questions through data collection methods, directly and indirectly. A more detailed description of data collection methods will be described in the following sub-sections.

Table 5: Aligning Research Question and Data Collection Methods

Research Question: How does a critical inquiry group, sustain and enhance educators' ability to teach for social justice in urban secondary schools?		
Sub-questions used to address research question	**Main method used to answer question**	**Supplemental method used to address question**
In what ways, if any, are participants of a critical inquiry group being supported and working to improve their teaching practice within CIG monthly meetings?	- CIG meeting observations -Document analysis of CIG meetings -Interview 3	- Classroom observations -Document analysis of student work - Interview 1 & 2
How are participants engaging in social justice teaching within their classrooms?	-Classroom observations -Interview 1 & 2 -Document analysis of student work	-CIG meeting observations -Document analysis of teaching documents

Observations. I engaged in participant observations, during critical inquiry group meetings and in the participants' classrooms. In each context, I varied my participant observational stance between participant as observer and observer as participant (Merriam, 2009). During the CIG meetings, I utilized the role as participant as observer, which involved me in the activities of the critical inquiry group yet also provided me the opportunity to document what was occurring and being said. In my observations, I focused on the educators teaching context, social justice teaching, and how the CIG was supporting and enhancing social justice teaching. As I observe teachers' classrooms, I took the role as observer as participant. In this role, I was less involved in classroom activities and primarily focusing on observing classroom culture, academic and critical literacy, and teaching that extended outside of the classroom. In both settings, I informed participants of my participant observational stance.

A total of eight CIG meetings were observed during the 2014-2015 academic year. My role as participant observer provided me with the dual role of documenting my field notes while participating in the CIG activities. My role as a participant as observer may have limited my ability to document everything that was occurring, however, I also audio record meetings to improve the accuracy of data collection. Moreover, my role as a participant observer provided distinct advantages. I was able to better hear, observe, and understand the way teachers were processing what was occurring in the CIG. Additionally, in this role, I built rapport with the CIG members so that they could share their perspectives, frustrations, or lessons with the group. Throughout the meetings, I also disclosed my own beliefs and prior experience as a classroom teacher during reading discussions and curricular presentations. However, I was mindful to not disrupt the natural setting, more specifically, I was deliberate to not lead teachers to answer specific questions or comment on research themes (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). Instead, as a participant observer, my intention was to have CIG meetings occur naturally. I followed up with teachers about research themes, topics, and questions during individual interviews outside of the CIG. While I was a participant as observer during the CIG meetings, I shifted into an observer as participant during classroom observations.

In the third phase of data collection, each participant's classroom was observed during the same classroom period for the duration of one to two weeks. During classroom observations, the students in the class were informed that I was collecting data on their teacher's teaching. In this setting, I focused primarily on observing the classroom culture, academic and critical literacy, and teaching that extended outside of the classroom; rather than being an active participant. At times, I participated in classroom activities, when prompted by the teacher; however, my focus was on documenting the setting and social justice teaching. I took field notes

in a designated space and also move around the class. The focus was on the teacher, however, at times I followed up with the teacher about what students said or did in the class.

During my observations, I used three main tools during observations: field notes, tape recorder, and a digital picture camera. In both settings, I took highly descriptive and reflective field notes during the meetings (Merriam, 2009). During CIG meetings, I utilized two tape recorders to better capture the conversation of CIG members. This was meant as a strategy to supplement my active participatory observational stance. Moreover, I utilized a digital camera to take pictures of the setting, instruction, and teacher and student created documents. All pictures were focus primarily on the teachers and not the students. Below, I will further expand on my observational field note protocol.

Focus of observations. The focus of observations varied between CIG meetings and classroom observation. During the critical inquiry group meetings, I paid attention to the members teaching context, social justice teaching, and types of support for educators. I listened for the ways that educators talked about the obstacles and support for social justice teaching at their school site and within the broader context of the post-NCLB era. Moreover, I listened for the ways that educators discussed their teaching throughout the meetings, specifically the tools or strategies teachers utilizing to teach for social justice. I also wanted to investigate the ways teachers used theory to inform their practice. Lastly, I focused on the pedagogical and teaching strategies and resources shared in the CIG.

During classroom observations, I focused on how participants were teaching for social justice by looking at classroom culture, academic and critical literacy, and teaching that extended outside of the classroom. Observations focused on the ways the teachers were organizing their classroom, specifically, their classroom structure, procedures, and the layout of the physical space. A big part of the observations were focused on how participants were merging academic

and critical literacy, employing caring relationships with students, and proving opportunities for activism. I paid particular attention to the way that teachers were balancing academic and critical literacy in their content area.

Observation protocol. Note taking was the primary tool to collect and analyze observations. Field notes had four components, heading information (i.e., title, date, location of observation, and CIG or classroom agenda), descriptive notes, observer's comments, and time stamps. The primary function was to thickly describe what was occurring during the observation (Merriam, 2009). Secondly, I embedded observer comments in the field notes to jot down my reflections, connection to research topics, or to code (Merriam, 2009). I separated my comments by indenting and then starting my comments with "O.C." to indicate that I am now including my "own comments." Observer comments were integrated as needed and occurred periodically. Lastly, I provided heading information and time stamped the field notes approximately every ten minutes to assist in data analysis.   An example of a field note is provided in *Figure 3*:

Figure 3: Sample Field Note

Field Note: CIG Meeting 3

Date: 3/1/15
Location: Social Justice Conference Room
CIG or Classroom Agenda:
- *Check In*
- *Reading Chalk Talk*
- *Reading Discussion*
- *Unit Share*
- *Closing*

12:10pm
Teacher X said that her AP continues to visit her classroom unannounced. She said, "I look around and all of sudden, he's there … it messes with me and my students". Several teachers nod in agreement.
> *O.C. – I'm noticing that there has been a lot of talk about school administrators disrupting classroom teaching during their observations. I may want to look into this.*

The example above provides a fictional field note.   All of the elements of the field note are provided, heading information, time stamp, description, and observer comment (O.C.). After each meeting, I immediately typed up my handwritten field notes and expanded on my previous description and observer comments. In addition, I also maintained a journal to reflect on emerging themes and assessed data collection.

At the beginning of each CIG meeting, I reminded the CIG members that I was recording the meeting and alerted everyone who entered after my announcement. I utilized two tape reorders to ensure that I captured the dialogue in each meeting. The first tape-recorder was the primary recording device and was placed at the middle of the meeting group. The second tape-recorder was a back up recorder placed close to my seat. Shortly after writing my field notes, I listened to the audio recording and revised my field note. The revised field note added description, observer comments, and some transcription to further understand what occurred during the CIG meeting.

Interviews. Interviews complimented participant observations.   Interviews are a method utilized to "gather descriptive data in the subjects' own words so that the research can develop insights on how subjects interpret some piece of the world" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, p. 95). According to Merriam (2009) there are three types of interviews structures, highly structured, semi-structured, and unstructured interviews. Highly structured interviews consist of predetermined wording and ordering of interview questions. Semi-structured interviews are more open ended, and are guided by specific questions or topics, yet do not have an exact wording. Lastly, unstructured interviews are the most informal and tend to be more exploratory. I utilized semi-structure and unstructured interviews throughout the study.

Each semi-structured interview had a specific theme and scripted questions. However, I did not strictly follow the order or wording of each question to ensure that I was able to

maximize each interview session with teachers. Moreover, I also periodically asked participants

unstructured questions. These questions occurred after critical inquiry group meetings and

classroom observations. The nature of unstructured questions was exploratory and meant to

better understand a phenomenon that was occurring or needs clarification.

Focus of interviews. Each participant participated in three semi-structured interviews.

The first interview examined participants path in becoming a social justice educator, illustrated

examples of their social justice teaching, and described their school context. The next interview

was administered after a series of classroom observations and focused on lesson planning,

implementation, and tools for social justice teaching. The last interview investigated how the

CIG impacted participants' ability to teach for social justice. Interview questions are listed in

Appendix 2.

Interview protocol. For this section, I focused primarily on semi-structured interview

protocol; unstructured questions did not have a set protocol. Each semi-structured interviews

was conducted either in the teacher's classroom or at their home. Interviews were done in a

quiet closed room. Each interview was tape recorded with the consent of each participant.

Similar to the CIG observations, I used two recorders to ensure that the interview was recorded.

During each interview, I had scripted questions (see *Appendix 2*) and a notepad to take notes

during the interview. Throughout the interview, I constantly member-checked—i.e., clarified

with the interviewee about what was said—to ensure that I was properly interpreting their

comments (Merriam, 2009). After the interview, I transcribed each interview verbatim.

Transcriptions followed Merriam (2009) protocol, which includes 1) identifying information—

i.e., date, name of participant, and interview number—at the top of the page, 2) numbering down

the left hand side, 3) single space transcription, and 4) double space between speakers.

Document Analysis. Document analysis is a data collection method that can be a sole research method or combined with other tools, such as observation and interviews to further address research questions (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Merriam, 2009). Analyzing documents provides an unobtrusive data collection option that is not dependent on human contact, such as observations or interviews (Merriam, 2009). Merriam (2009) refers to documents as "a wide range of written, visual, digital, and physical material relevant to the study at hand" (p. 139). There are a wide variety of documents utilized in qualitative research, such as, personal documents, popular culture documents, visual documents, artifacts, research-generated documents are different types of documents (Merriam, 2009).

Document analysis focus. In this study, I used popular culture documents, visual documents, and artifacts to focus on the 1) CIG's structure and organization, 2) CIG meeting and classroom culture 3) participants lesson planning and teaching, and 4) instructional tools and strategies. As previously mentioned, using a document analysis method allowed me to gather data through unobtrusive means. Below, I will further explain how I used documents to address my research questions.

Artifacts were the primary documents collected and analyzed, specifically, CIG created documents, chalk talk butcher paper, CIG monthly meeting summaries, teaching documents, and student work. During classroom observations, participants lesson planning and instructional tools were investigated to provide examples of social justice teaching. I focused on the documents that participants created and utilized in their classroom. Additionally, student work was also analyzed to examine social justice teaching. Moreover, CIG meeting artifacts were also investigated, specifically, curriculum share documents, chalk talk butcher paper, and CIG monthly summaries. Curriculum share document provides an opportunity to examine how the larger CIG membership and the participants were engaging in social justice teaching. Lastly,

CIG monthly summaries—CIG generated documents that report monthly meeting content—documented meeting activities.

Lastly, popular culture documents and visual documents served a secondary role in document analysis. Popular culture documents, such as APP's website and Facebook page, were analyzed to understand the organization and the way CIG that meetings were publicized. Visual documents—i.e., photographs—will also be used to document critical inquiry group and classroom layout, culture, lessons, and activities. In summary, document analysis provided a vital component in data collection.

Table 6: Focus of Document Analysis

Type	Example of Document	Document Collection Focus
Popular Cultural	-APP Facebook Page -APP and CIG event flyers	Analyze the way APP and CIG meetings are publicized.
Visual Documents	-Pictures of teachers' classrooms -Pictures of CIG activities -Pictures of CIG meeting chart paper	Document critical inquiry group and classroom observations layout, culture, and activities.
Artifacts	-Teacher lesson and unit plans -Teacher handouts -Student work -Curriculum share documents -CIG monthly meeting summaries	Analyze participants planning and teaching. Document CIG meetings.

Document analysis protocol. In contrast to the observational and interview protocol, document collection was easily retrieved although at times, did require some logistical planning. During the first phase of data collection, I investigated organizational documents to better understand the CIG. I first examined the APP website and Facebook page to understand and further investigate how the CIG operated and works to support participants. In the following phases of data collection, I shifted my collection and analysis of documents towards CIG meetings and participants' classrooms. While conducting research, I asked before gathering CIG document summaries, curriculum shared, chart paper used, and any other documents.

Documents gathered from classroom observations required logistical planning. Prior to classroom visits, I asked for lesson plans (in any format) to be provided before or during the day

of observation. I also asked for copies of handouts and resources used to conduct the lesson plan. After the lesson(s) were completed, I asked the teacher to submit student work to understand social justice teaching assignments. In summary, I have described how I utilized observations, interviews, and documents as data collection tools, across the CIG meeting space and participants classrooms, to understand how they were being supported and also teaching for social justice. In the following sub-section, I will further explain how I analyzed collected data.

Data Analysis

Data analysis, according to Bogdan & Biklen (2003), is "the process of systematically searching and arranging interview transcripts, field notes, and other material that you accumulate to enable you to come up with your findings" (p. 147). In other words, it is the process of making sense out of data (Merriam, 2009). In qualitative research, data analysis is interconnected with data collection and data interpretation (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Merriam, 2009). Combining data collection and data analysis is the preferred method of conducting qualitative research, it allows the researcher to constantly narrow and refine research tools and analysis throughout the research process to arrive to more insightful findings (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Merriam, 2009). Moreover, combining data collection and analysis prevents the researcher from being overwhelmed by mounds of data at the end of data collection (Merriam, 2009). During data collection and analysis, the researcher should also engage in data interpretation—i.e., "developing ideas about your findings and relating them to the literature and to broader concerns and concepts" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, p. 147). Data interpretation is interconnected with data analysis and moves the researcher to drawing conclusions about the study. In this section, I will primarily focus on data analysis but will also discuss data collection and interpretation in less detail.

Managing Data. Data was managed through a computer qualitative data software, Maxqda. As data was being collected, it was input into Maxqda and then coding followed to analyze data. At first, broad coding occurred that was then narrowed down into categories and sub-categories. "Coding is nothing more than assigning some sort of shorthand designation to various aspects of your data so that you can easily retrieve specific pieces of the data" (Merriam, 2009, p. 173).

During the first phases of data analysis, I engaged in open coding that consisted of jotting down relevant themes, topics, or quotes. From these initial codes, categories and sub-categories were constructed. A research category consists of a relevant research theme, pattern, description, or a finding that organizes and interprets data (Merriam, 2009). Throughout the phases of data collection and analysis, categories were moved from numerous categories, initially, and then categories were reduced and collapsed into refined categories and subcategories. After each week of data collection and analysis, codes, categories, and sub-categories were developed, reworked, and eliminated. Category construction was further enhanced with the use of two data analysis tools, a research inventory spreadsheet and research memo.

Data was then organized in a research inventory spreadsheet to assist in data analysis (Merriam, 2009). The research inventory put all case data, side by side, so that all of the data was in one place. A fictitious example of a research inventory is provided below. The research inventory included participant name and relevant research codes, categories, and information. Lastly, I also utilized a weekly research memo to reflect on data collection methods and data analysis (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). I used this tool primarily to reflect on process. In other words, I reflected on what I learn about my research methods, myself as a researcher, and the data.

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Figure 4: Sample Research Inventory

	CIG	Mika	Dan	Lucia	Omara	Clyde	Robert
FN-CIG-02.01.15	A teacher discussed that AP is interrupting teaching …						
INT1		Conversation with student about Ferguson …	School is a Program improvement school …	Mother inspired her to be a teacher …	Teaching about police brutality …	Was an organizer prior to teaching …	CCSS are not being emphasized at her school …

Data Analysis

In phase one of data collection and analysis (see *Table 4*), *exploring the CIG & participants*, data collection and analysis focused on the CIG as a whole through participant observations, CIG meeting transcription, and document analysis. I mined through APP's website and Facebook page to better understand the organization and operation of the CIG. Moreover, during CIG meetings, I took field notes, audio recorded, and took pictures of chart paper used and of activities. Afterwards, I typed up my field notes with my observer comments. I then revised field notes after listen to audio recording of CIG meetings. Throughout this process I began open coding and developing preliminary coding categories. Lastly, I also reflected in my research memo. This same sequence of analyzing CIG meeting data continued after every research phase.

During phase two, *identifying participants and social justice teaching*, I continued to analyze CIG meeting data but then focused on the participants. The first interview of all the participants were analyzed individually and then I cross analysis of all the interviewees. Interviews were transcribed verbatim and coded individually before moving on to the next interview. Thus, interview was analyzed independently—i.e., transcription and coding before examining another interview. Then a cross analysis of all interviews occurred. Interview 1 was done first to allow myself, as the researcher to hear the ways that teachers were describing their

teaching before observing classroom instruction. Moreover, it allowed me to engage in cross

analysis sooner in data analysis, instead, of waiting to collect all of the data. In cross analysis, I

examined the research inventory and participant data together to explore distinct and similar

themes and coding categories.

In the third phase of research, *analyzing social justice teaching*, I continued to analyze

CIG meeting data. At this point, I moved into teacher's classrooms and conducted observations

and the second set of interviews. Similar to the previous stage, analysis occurred independently,

more specifically, I conducted classroom observations and interview for each participant. After

coding for each participant, I then moved onto the next case. Afterwards, cross case analysis of

social justice teaching occurred. Lastly, in the phase four, CIG meetings data continue to be

analyzed. In addition, I examined the CIG's impact on participants teaching through the last set

of interviews. Interviews followed the same case data analysis sequence as previously described.

Research Validity and Reliability

In summary, the study's use of qualitative research tools, such as, observations,

interviews, and document analysis worked together to engage in triangulation (Bogdan & Biklen,

2003; Merriam, 2009). Triangulation has two distinct advantages in qualitative research, first it

draws from multiple methods that provide distinct insight on a phenomenon; and second, data is

crosschecked and verified by these methods (Merriam, 2009). In designing this research project,

I purposely chose to utilize multiple research methods to better understand the impact of a

critical inquiry group on social justice teaching. For example, instead of just hearing teachers

talk about their practice, I also wanted to go into teachers' classrooms and also examine teaching

documents to investigate social justice teaching. Thus, triangulating data was a purposeful

strategy to engage in a rigorous study. While the term, "triangulation" is often misused in

research (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003); I am using the term to explain how the research design and

methods came together to ensure research reliability and validity.

Chapter 4: Community of Transformative Praxis

The study examined a critical inquiry group's impact on social justice educators' ability to teach for social justice in urban secondary schools. There were two areas of focus. First, the way teachers were supported within the critical inquiry group (CIG) and second, the way teachers engaged in social justice teaching. This chapter focused on the former and addressed the following question: in what ways, if any, were participants of a critical inquiry group being supported and working to improve their teaching? More specifically, this chapter describes how critical inquiry group meetings were structured to develop and engage participants in social justice teaching. Findings suggest that the critical inquiry group validated and inspired social justice teaching through what I have described as a *community of transformative praxis* (CTP). CTP is a social justice process that engages individuals in developing politically and pedagogically, within a like-minded community. This chapter will: 1) describe the conceptualization of CTP, 2) explain the three components of CTP, 3) provide an example of CTP at a high school, and conclude by 4) explaining that CTP validated and inspired participants to teach for social justice.

CTP draws from two theories of social justice process: *praxis* and *transformative resistance.* Freire (2003) explains that praxis is aimed at politicizing and changing society through a process of "action and reflection of men and women upon their world in order to transform it" (2003, p.79). Praxis is a strategy aimed for individuals to engage in personal transformation while they strive towards social change. The concept of praxis provides insight on the way that individuals work to develop as social justice educators and the way that they work to engage in social justice teaching in urban secondary schools.

Building off of Freire's concept of praxis, Solórzano & Delgado-Bernal (2001) developed the notion of transformative resistance where individuals have both "a critique of oppression and

a desire for social justice" that include an internal and external dimension (D. Solórzano, personal communication, 2014). Unlike praxis, transformative resistance highlights the hidden and internal aspects of the social justice process that may be "subtle or even silent and might go unnamed" (p. 324). Transformational resistance provides a lens on the ways that teachers engage in social justice development and teaching that may or may not go noticed.

The intersections of *praxis* and *transformational resistance*, provides the advantage of positioning social justice development and teaching as a process that requires the combination of politicization and action toward social change. The intersections of praxis and transformative resistance conceptualize what this study has identified as a *community of transformative praxis* (CTP). CTP explains the way the CIG was structured to engage like-minded educators in a social justice process toward political and pedagogical development. CTP includes three characteristics: 1) a deliberate political space, 2) praxis-oriented structure, and 3) shared leadership and facilitation that result in educators being validated and inspired to teach for social justice in urban schools (see *Figure 5* below).

Figure 5: Community of Transformative Praxis
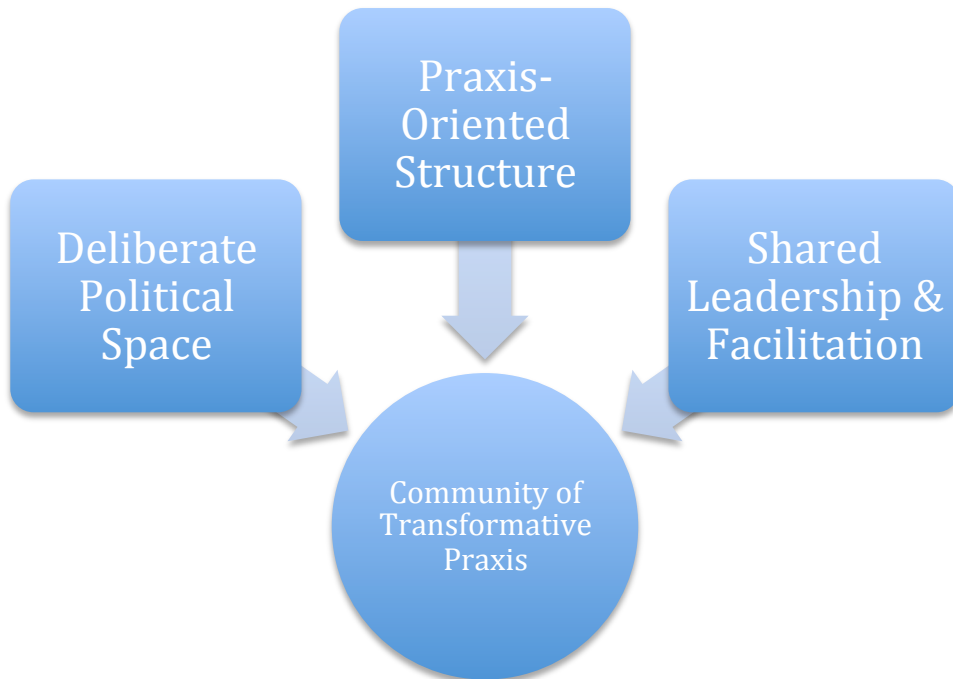
Deliberate Political Space

The critical inquiry group (CIG) was housed and operated through a teacher activist organization, All Power to the People (APP). Most APP members were educators of color working in schools throughout the City of Los Angeles who also engaged in various forms of social activism. All CIG members were social justice educators who were either novice or veteran educators. Most CIG members were active members of APP. Others were introduced to the CIG through an APP sponsored event, such as attending a general body meeting, political discussion, movie night, or curriculum fair.

All case study participants indicated that prior to becoming teachers, they actively worked to deepen their politics and teaching in urban schools. For example, they each had been involved in at least one of the following activities: participated in a group that read critical theory, engaged in student activism or community organizing, and worked with low income youth of color who were in and out schools through organizations geared toward social justice.

The past experiences of these teachers revealed their desire and need to continue working with like-minded colleagues who can support their political and pedagogical development in the classroom. The CIG provided a space to connect both their past and current activism with their classroom practices[8], which in turn deepened their social justice thinking and practice.

In addition to having a socially just membership, the CIG utilized *decolonizing pedagogy*[9] as a political and pedagogical framework. The phrase "decolonizing pedagogy" was displayed and written on all CIG related documents including recruitment flyers and handouts used during monthly meetings. For example, during the first CIG meeting in September, a handout describing the objectives of the group was provided stating the following of decolonizing pedagogy:

> The CIG is an intentional community of teachers that are committed to exploring decolonial curriculum and pedagogies. Through a process of reading critical social theory and presenting and receiving feedback on lessons, teachers are able to become part of an authentic learning community. Through this process of defining decolonial pedagogy, teachers are supported, inspired and pushed to become more effective critical educators.

In addition to the objectives, the handout also listed the "tenants of decolonizing pedagogy." The excerpt further affirms that the CIG intentionally organized CIG members to work within a community to "become more effective critical educators."

Decolonizing pedagogy seemed to play a central role in politicizing CIG members. For example, the CIG had a yearlong inquiry question—"how do we develop a decolonizing pedagogy?"—that was read aloud by a CIG member at the start of every meeting. Teachers were further challenged to engage in decolonial pedagogy by answering the following questions in small group discussions:

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[8] Throughout the paper, I will make reference to "practice," to suggest teachers' actions that may or may not relate to teaching.

[9] Decolonizing pedagogy is a theoretical and pedagogical framework for social justice teaching. It provides a historical lens to better understand the contemporary impact of settler colonialism and capitalism on indigenous people and also people of color (Fanon, 2004; Tuck & Yang, 2012).

1. What does a decolonizing pedagogy look like in your classroom?
2. In what ways are you going to implement a decolonizing pedagogy in you classroom?
3. What do you need from the CIG to do this?

Although not all teachers identified their teaching as decolonial, they nevertheless appreciated the influence a decolonizing framework had on their political and pedagogical development. Dan, a first year teacher enrolled in a social justice themed teacher program, explained that while his program promoted a social justice focus, it failed to connect "oppression back to colonial legacies which is something the inquiry group does intentionally." He further mentioned that the CIG provides a shaper political analysis, which influenced his teaching.

Mika, another student similar Dan, also appreciated the comprehensive space the CIG provided. Mika said, "I feel like as within both spaces, within the teacher education space and the CIG space, both are focused on this idea of developing. CIG has just more of a political stance." Both teachers agreed that the CIG's political stance was useful for pre-service teachers' development. CIG members often made similar comments during meetings, in regards to their teacher training,

The CIG also provided a like-minded community for educators to engage in transformative praxis. Participants constantly expressed the isolation felt at their school sites and their struggle to find colleagues that were politically and pedagogically aligned. Mika echoed the concerns of various participants: "I think that for myself, I'm afraid. I have a lot of fears as I continue to teach and one is losing community. Especially feeling isolated in the classroom and not feeling politically aligned with a lot of my peers." CIG members constantly mentioned how they felt a special connection with their fellow CIG members and their efforts toward social justice efforts more so than their co-workers at school. Lucia, a CIG member, especially felt these similar sentiments. After presenting her curriculum, Lucia said: "This is my family. This is my community. This is where we create together. I'm sad that I don't get to feel that very often."

In this excerpt, Lucia acknowledged that a community of like-minded folks not only supports her politically and pedagogically but also provides a type of social support.

Praxis-Oriented Structure

In addition to the CIG space being a deliberately political space, the CIG was also a praxis-oriented structure that engaged like-minded educators in a social justice process toward political and pedagogical development. As previously mentioned, CIG meetings included three parts: 1) small inquiry groups, 2) theoretical and/or pedagogical readings and discussions, and 3) curriculum presentations. All three parts were geared towards having teachers engage in reflection, theory, and practice.

Pedagogical goals, small inquiry groups. At the beginning of the year, small inquiry groups were introduced as a way for educators to engage in small group settings. The small groups provided an intimate space for teachers' to develop inquiry questions, action plans, support systems, and collaborations among members. Throughout the year, members self-selected into smaller groups based on similar inquiry topics. Throughout the year, members monitored their progress and held each other accountable.

The small inquiry groups were significant because it deliberately had teachers engage in an inquiry on teaching and develop pedagogical goals. Robert, a founding member of the CIG reflects on the pedagogical goals that he set throughout his teaching career and within the CIG:

> As an ethnic studies teacher, I got really interested in writing about social justice, poetry and the development of essay writing as something important for the students to have these skill sets to get into college. And that's still there, but every year I'm thinking about adding something more, so that year was like, "How do I make things more decolonial" and I decolonized my government and economics class … That was also the year that I developed the Afro-Latino Black Brown Unity Project and [it was] based on a lot of the feedback that I was getting from the CIG as decolonial, right? So what does decolonial look [like] when you think about movements for liberation and then how it's connected to our communities today? This year was the issue of feminism and queer theory.

The small group emphasis on inquiry appeared to keep teachers' thinking about improving practice and engaging in praxis. As Robert mentioned, the goal is for teachers to continue to maintain, refine, and explore new ways of improving their practice. Throughout his nine years of teaching, he continuously set goals on improving practice. Further, he mentioned that the CIG supported his goals to ensure that the goals were socially just and well executed[10].

In addition, the small inquiry groups provided a space for teachers to reflect individually on an inquiry question and develop pedagogical goals while being supported by a small group of like-minded colleagues. The small inquiry group component of the CIG was added the year of the study and did not take up much meeting time. The bulk of the meetings were focused on the reading discussions and curriculum presentation, both focusing on teaching and classroom practice.

Intellectualizing practice, critical readings and discussions. The reading groups provided teachers with text to develop a deeper analysis of school conditions, explore pedagogical approaches, and reflect on their teaching and classroom practice. The readings included topics on decolonizing pedagogy, ethnic studies, critical race theory, queer pedagogy, Black and Chicana Feminism, critiques of neo-liberal education, critical pedagogy, and youth participatory action research. Each reading was collectively decided on and aimed at improving teaching and classroom practices.

Lucia explains below how the inquiry group connected monthly readings to pedagogy and practice:

> Every time we read something it was always prefaced with "we need to be doing this because it's important for young people, it is important for our communities, and it is important for having any kind of hope of change." That is why I engage with a theory and that's what I take away. I feel like there's things that we've read … makes me excited and I think about how I can teach, reshape some of my projects to look more like that.

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[10] In the following chapter, Robert's goal of teaching on the issue of feminism and queer theory will be revisited.

Readings and discussions, according to Lucia, did not occur in a vacuum; instead, the text was utilized to consider how to improve the material conditions of the students and the communities they worked in. For Lucia, this meant drawing from theoretical and pedagogical texts to improve and reshape her curriculum.

Mika further mentioned that the readings, "help me address and develop my social justice lens through a very theory-based and practical-based and through lived experience … it is incredibly rigorous." She suggests that the praxis oriented structure of collectively reading and discussing a text helped her to develop her pedagogy and practice. Similarly, veteran teachers also stated that reading critical text kept them updated on innovative social justice pedagogies. For example, Clyde a teacher in his seventh year of teaching said, "it's asking me to read and critically think about articles … concepts, and theories, and analysis of the world around us, which I'm not reading." Clyde also mentioned that reading text allowed him to disconnect from his day-to-day teaching responsibilities to then re-imagine how to improve his practice.

The reading groups and discussions provided the members from the CIG the opportunity to intellectualize their practice. Lucia said the following about the CIG: "it's the only place in which I feel like my profession is treated like an intellectual profession or where I'm treated as an intellectual". Lucia echoed the comments of many of the teachers who were disappointed with their school based professional development. Given the context of top-down and rote school professional developments, teachers have limited, if any, opportunity to intellectualize their practice (Giroux, 1988).

The phrase, "treated as an intellectual" helps to capture how teachers intellectualized their practice through the process of collectively reading and discussing. At times, this process allowed them to advance their understanding of social justice teaching. For example, Clyde explains how reading and discussing in a community allowed him to gain an understanding of

queer pedagogy:

> [The reading] was super academic, the vocab was pretty intense and actually the argument was a little unclear. When I read through that, I walked away like "I'm not sure what's going on" or I'm not sure what the author is trying to say because it's both historical and current and then there was questions. So, I think the discussion was cool to see … so I was able to use other people's interpretations to build on my own understanding of the article. Saying that, the discussion correlated to help me understand, to benefit my teaching just because it made the article more accessible.

In this excerpt, the teacher shared how reading and discussing in a community further enhanced his ability to gain pedagogical insight. In addition, it demonstrates that when CIG members were confronted with complicated or unfamiliar readings, they were able to lean on their peers to work though the difficult text. Reading in a community appeared to provide an intellectual bridge for teachers, which in turn allowed them to connect abstract concepts discussed in the reading groups into the classroom.

The readings also provided entry points for teachers to create new or revise a unit or lesson plan. Mika stated that during her gentrification unit she had students read a *Different Eyes/Open Eyes: Community-Based Participatory Action Research* that was also an assigned reading for the March CIG meeting (Cahill, Rios-Moore, & Threattes, 2008). The reading was closely aligned with her culminating assignment, which was to display youth centered actions against gentrification. While not all teachers read CIG assigned readings with their students, they did constantly comment that the readings served as an inspiration to further enhance their practice. For example, a number of the teachers credited the youth participatory action research (YPAR) readings and discussions in assisting them to develop action-oriented projects with their students. In an interview, Robert referenced a CIG reading that included action oriented research, "as a whole I just want to do more on developing more critical YPAR approach. So (the author) has given this example of the Posadas, that her students were doing with the labor

center." Throughout the academic year, action oriented research readings were the most popular[11].

We are our best teachers, curriculum presentation. While teachers often mentioned that they were constantly thinking about their teaching and practice throughout the CIG, the curriculum presentation provided a distinct opportunity for teachers to construct and improve a teaching segment. The following curriculum presentation examples exemplify how CIG members engaged in a community of transformative praxis.

Curriculum presentations provided educators a space to share a particular curricular unit that he or she was planning to teach and sought feedback. Each presenter developed 1-3 feedback questions that they asked the audience, such as, "how can I make this more critically conscious for students?" or "how can I streamline this unit to include critical themes and the state standards?" Presentations followed the following protocol: 1) a presenters described the lesson or unit (15 minutes), 2) participants asked clarifying questions (5 minutes), 3) participants gave feedback (15 minutes), and lastly 4) the presenters reflect and share takeaways from audience feedback (5 minutes). The protocol was utilized to ensure that the presenter had time to describe the unit, answer questions, and reflect. In addition, the feedback protocol also ensured that feedback was orderly and centered on the presenter's feedback questions.

Clyde, a member of the CIG, appreciated the praxis-oriented structure the curriculum presentation offered:

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[11] Chapter six will provide examples of how teachers built on CIG assigned YPAR readings into developing inquiry and action-oriented projects.

> What I appreciated about the CIG [curriculum presentation] was that there was a praxis. There was an action component where I could be held accountable through developing my own work with like-minded folks that I trusted to give me on-point feedback. Which wasn't related to any evaluation or any difference of power or a boss, principal, teacher relationship. Where I could be like "yeah this is where I'm at, help me." And I found that after I did my first presentation, I was like this is what I need. And also it was super rewarding supporting people and giving them feedback. So that notion of establishing ourselves to become more critical educators through a community that's an amazing process that I've yet to experience outside of the CIG.

He explained that both the presenters and the audience members are in a process of improving each other's practice, which he terms as "praxis." Clyde's excerpt best describes how the curriculum presentation engaged in a cyclical process of action and reflection, specifically, presenting curriculum, receiving feedback, adjusting a teaching unit, and then teaching the unit.

Lucia, a third year teacher, described another example of how the curriculum presentations were valued by the CIG members. After presenting a unit on immigration, Lucia described the impact of receiving the following pedagogical feedback from a peer:

> Let's take a look at which [approach] might be the best for your students? What might be the best [way] to introduce this unit? What can you do for your students who are not Latino? Who are African American or who are Filipino?

Lucia shared that the comment allowed her to address a blind spot in her unit, specifically making the immigration unit meaningful to her non-Latina/o student: "That was cool because those are questions that I hadn't considered, and that folks were like bringing up to me and it was cool to feel like we were creating it together." Lucia's comments suggest that the curriculum presentation provided the opportunity for a community of like-minded educators to focus on an individual's pedagogical development and better equip her to teach for social justice.

The audience members also benefit from the curricular presentation. Teachers often said that the curriculum presentation allowed them to see the possibilities and ways to engage in social justice teaching. For example, below Dan mentioned that the curriculum presentation was a valuable part of the CIG because it laid out the elements of a social justice lesson or unit.

It was really helpful to see how they scaffolded their theories, the order in which they present them and the connections that they made … selections of reading, the way that they scaffolded, the order in which they approached it and how they tied them together with their assessments.

As a first year English teacher, he stated that he benefited from being able to see the way teachers' construct socially just units. It was important for him to know how teachers "scaffolded the order" of content, text, theories, and assessments within a unit of study. Similar to Dan, newer teachers stated that they did not have many opportunities to examine the planning of social justice lessons at their schools. As a result, they mentioned that the curriculum presentations were invaluable and felt inspired with seeing more seasoned teachers talk through their teaching, specifically, how they connected course content with social justice topics.

Veteran teachers often mentioned that they also benefited from the curriculum presentation. For example, Clyde explains how he gained curricular resources and ideas for his Art and Literacy classroom.

It's been a skill share, I've gotten both text resources, articles that people have read. I've gotten both unit ideas or unit designs that people have implemented or reflected on. I think it's really nice just building my perspective and tool box and understanding of what people have done to address or work through issues that to be honest none of my colleagues [at this school] are doing.

CIG meeting observations also confirmed Clyde's comments, I also witnessed that most presenters passed out copies of their lesson/unit plan and supplemental information to the audience. Clyde's excerpt suggests that the curricular presentations gave him something tangible to add to his curricular "toolbox" and/or use as a point of reference. Clyde later explained that when he observed Omara's presentation he reflected on his cultural collage unit and contemplated how he was addressing identity. He said, "All right, this is how I'm doing it. This is how she did it. This is how I want to do it also." After Omara's presentation, Clyde learned strategies of how to better address identity in his cultural collage unit, including multidimensional identities.

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After the curriculum presentations, teachers would discuss the learning segments and share resources. In at least one instance, a teacher mentioned that she adapted lessons from the curriculum presentation. Following a conversation with Robert, Lucia said she reworked his, "Afro Latino [unit] … to talk about Mexico and then also his (Chicano) pop up unit" in her Spanish course. The findings seem to suggest that the teachers in the CIG were constantly working toward improving their social justice teaching practice.

Shared Leadership and Facilitation

Different from other types of teacher development (i.e. school-based professional development, curricular workshops, or teacher preparation programs) the CIG was a teacher-led and facilitated space. The CIG was not created or coordinated by an external entity. Instead, CIG teachers led and facilitated the space and addressed concerns related to their social justice teaching and practice in urban schools. In addition, the space utilized a horizontal leadership model[12], instead of a top-down approach. The space was created and organized to draw strengths from the membership. It also allowed the group to determine the focus of the space and how best to develop the membership politically and pedagogically.

CIG had a coordinator that was elected by the APP members who was responsible for organizing meeting agendas and facilitating and distributing the monthly readings. Clyde and Robert, the current and prior CIG coordinators (respectively), were intentional about the space being member-centered and facilitated. For example, at the beginning of the year, Clyde created a survey that asked members which themes and topics they prefer to explore and discuss to enhance their teaching. The CIG coordinator also had beginning, middle, and end-of-the-year surveys to evaluate what members hoped to gain from the group. Surveys also asked members

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[12] Horizontal leadership is an alternative model from the hierarchical leadership model. Instead leadership is distributed throughout out the membership and done collectively.

for topics of interest for future readings, while also provided a space to of recommendations to improve the CIG.

In addition to garnering members' input through surveys, collective decisions occurred in every meeting. For example, each meeting included a pre-discussion "chalk talk" activity. Members listed questions from the reading and then collectively decided on the questions that would guide their discussions. In addition, theoretical and pedagogical topics were identified and chosen by the membership to determine the next month's reading topic and text. At the end of each meeting, someone volunteered to present a learning segment during the following month's curriculum share. Collective decisions provided the opportunity to draw from the needs and strengths of the membership. Throughout the study, teachers mentioned they wanted to explore action-oriented projects, which then led to a series of meetings having a focus on Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR). For example, during the March meeting, a teacher asked, "how can YPAR occur in a class of 30-35 students?" This led to a conversation, where one of the first year teachers described her experience with YPAR and eventually shared a YPAR-based unit during the curriculum presentation. Thus, the shared leadership and facilitation model allowed for knowledge and support to come from all members, regardless of their teaching experience.

Facilitation also played a key factor to securing an inclusive CIG. Throughout meetings, members were encouraged to facilitate different portions of the meeting, such as the welcome, chalk talk, reading discussions, or the curriculum share. The space sought to include multiple voices to ensure that it reflected the various needs and perspectives of the group. To encourage new voices, veteran CIG members modeled how to facilitate parts of the CIG meeting to encourage broader participation from the membership. For example during the October meeting, Robert said, "facilitating is very easy, any of us could do it. We're hoping someone could

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volunteer [the chalk talk] for next month." As a result, throughout the year, various CIG members, including first time members, often participated in facilitating the meeting.

Omara's excerpts below explain the benefit of having a shared leadership and facilitation model. "I really appreciate the way that the responsibility is delegated in each of the meetings. It's voluntary, but every week … a different person is leading the discussions." She appreciated that facilitation for the meetings rotated among. Omara further stated, "people are generally really conscious about how much they're speaking." CIG members monitored how often CIG members spoke in the group and encouraged everyone to speak. Her comments and my observations suggest that the shared leadership and facilitation model provided an inclusive environment for CIG members.

CTP at a High School

An unexpected finding occurred during an interview with Lucia. She mentioned that both she and Omara had adopted the CIG structure at their high school campus. The example below provides insight on how a community of transformative praxis was structured at a school site. Prior to the study, a small group of teachers at their campus, including Lucia and Omara had been getting together to read and discuss critical text. Yet, the group's structure changed after a student publicly called out the school for a lack of staff diversity and culturally relevant curriculum.

Lucia recalled, during a school sponsored poetry event a student said, "I can count on one hand, the number of teachers who look like me here. Like, it's business as usual even when they're gunning down people in the street, like black people who look like me." As a result the group started to meet more frequently and altered the teacher group structure to respond to the students comments. Lucia recaps how she approached the group, "let's come up with a question and let's answer that question through reading, through coming at some sort of political clarity

together." Her quote suggests that she wanted the group to work through a collective praxis to arrive at "political clarity," similar to the CIG. She later explained that her suggestion to the group was indeed influenced by her participation in the CIG. She said, "that (conversation) was definitely [influenced] from CIG because we hadn't been in learning spaces together. That was the only learning space that we shared and it was the one that we could pull from."

Drawing from the praxis oriented structure of the CIG; the group utilized pre-assigned CIG texts and also started developing plans of action to address the lack of staff and curricular cultural diversity. The group first worked with students to employ a school climate survey, which confirmed that the larger student body was concerned about the lack of faculty diversity and culturally relevant curriculum. Following the survey, the group approached administration and offered to facilitate a teacher-led professional development (PD) workshop for the school staff. Lucia recounts the group's proposal to school administration. "We got together (with administration) and we talked about what we want to do in PD. We want to come in strategically and do teaching strategies." Administration agreed to allow the group to develop a single professional development. After the PD, administration asked the group to continue facilitating a series of PD's, which totaled three PD workshops. She said the conversations led to the school reviving the Black Student Union and finding a teacher sponsor; and began an ethnic studies initiative at their school. During an interview, Lucia mentioned the future of the teacher facilitated PD at her school site:

> Yesterday was our last PD. And, I met with the administration and she was a little defensive about what we had done, but also was like, "I want you all to think about what you want to do next year … think about what you want to focus on, if you want to focus on strategy, if you want to focus on curriculum." And so, my vote is for curriculum.

According to Lucia, the administrator reassured her that the teacher group would continue to facilitate PD's. In addition, she said that group would focus its efforts on the ethnic studies school initiative, specifically developing curriculum. In the excerpt above, she also infers that the

group and the administrator may have had some disagreements when she said, "she was a little defensive about what we had done." Her words serve as a reminder that changing school culture does not occur without encountering challenges or difference of opinions. The example above shows how CIG members adopt a CIG structure at their school site. It also provides a glimpse of the possibility of CTP at a school site and will be revisited in the concluding chapter.

Significance: Validating and Inspiring Social Justice Teaching

This chapter explained how a community of transformative praxis operated to benefit the participants of the study. As previously mentioned, within the post-NCLB era, it is becoming more difficult to teach for social justice. In addition, within this context, social justice teaching does not always conform to the national discourse of "good teaching" or what is valued in schools. The findings suggest that a community of transformative praxis validated and inspired the participants to teach for social justice.

Throughout the study, the participants often expressed that unlike other spaces, the CIG acknowledged and praised their work as "good teaching," something that they had not received anywhere else. Below Clyde provides an example of how his teaching was validated during a curriculum presentation.

> It has really built confidence and affirmation that I'm doing, good work … CIG not only says keep doing [critical work but] don't think about stopping even though no one else in my professional environment is doing [similar work] and that I can't get support.

Clyde summarized what many of the participants' said about the CIG. If provided affirmation that they were doing "good work" and also encouraged them to "keep doing" good work. Throughout the chapter, examples were given of teachers being isolated or lacking support at their school sites to teach for social justice. Yet the CIG provided a supportive structure for like-minded individuals to validate social justice teaching.

Participants also suggested they were inspired to teach for social justice. Lucia provides an example of the support system available for her at the CIG:

> To have people who had been teaching for a long time and to have people who have not been teaching for a long time, and then those folks in the middle, made it feel like it was ... it could be sustainable as well as like there was support for me at all different levels. Because I think a lot of times we feel like it's idealistic to teach this way or to feel like you're going to be in teaching for a long time. So the folks who had been there for like 8 years, I was like excited because that was hope for me that I wasn't going to get burnt out or that I was going to have to stop teaching the way I did at some point."

In this excerpt Lucia mentions that her participation in the CIG has helped her realize that social justice teaching is not "idealistic" but is real and can be "sustainable" with spaces like the CIG. The space has given her "hope" so she can continue to engage in social justice teaching. Similar to Lucia, the participants often mentioned that the CIG gave them hope and inspired them to teach for social justice through small inquiry groups, readings and discussions, and the curriculum presentations.

In closing, the CIG's community of transformative praxis validated and inspired social justice teaching through a political, praxis oriented, and inclusive structure. Participants not only benefited from their peers' lessons, advice, and resources, but also from the social and emotional support within the CIG. A community of transformative praxis helped participants to deal with the difficulty of teaching for social justice and stay in the classroom. Moreover, teachers were also inspired to teach for social justice through a politically and pedagogically like-minded community. The following chapter will build on the findings of this chapter and further explain how the CIG provided a model to sustain and enhance social justice teaching.

Chapter 5: Sustaining and Enhancing Social Justice Teaching

While chapter four was focused on the structure of the CIG, this chapter highlights the way CIG members collaborated with each other to support and improve their ability to teach for social justice. The participants mentioned that they benefited from the CIG because they were able to *trust* their peers, be *vulnerable* with each other, and were held *accountable* of their teaching. The three components: trust, vulnerability and accountability, describe what I term as a *model for sustaining and enhancing social justice teaching* through a critical inquiry group. This chapter will explain the components of the model for sustaining and enhancing social justice teaching[13] and include an in-depth example of how the model supported and improved a participant's ability to teach a unit on gender and queer theory.

To better understand the use of the terms trust, vulnerability, and accountability throughout the paper, I will briefly define and operationalize the terms below.

- *Trust* involves faith in a person or people to not cause them harm but to be honest, supportive, and engage in reciprocal relationship. I used trust to describe the participants' willingness to collaborate with their peers in the CIG due to their shared desire to teach for social justice.

- *Vulnerable* occurs when a person is honest with themself and others about an area of weakness. It is important to understand that being vulnerable is absent of self-doubt or conceit, instead it involves a genuine reflection of a person's current situation to then improve a trait, skill, or ability to perform a task. Throughout the paper, I used being vulnerable or vulnerability to describe how the participants exposed a weakness in their teaching to then strengthen their ability to teach for social justice. Being

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[13] It is important to note, that the use of the word model, suggest that it is a model and there may be other models that sustain and social justice teaching.

vulnerable not only required a participant to trust their peers but also to be reflective and describe how they would like their teaching to improve.

- *Accountable* involves a person taking responsibility for an action that he or she did or intends to do. Being held accountable can be an individual or collective act that provides constructive criticism. In this study, I described being accountable or accountability as participants' supporting or being supported to teach for social justice. Accountability occurred in a group setting and often involved a CIG member alerting a peer of a blind spot, offering advice, or providing a critique, in order to improve their teaching.

Figure 6 describes the three mutually dependent variables that lead to sustaining and enhancing social justice teaching.

Figure 6: Model for Sustaining and Enhancing Social Justice Teaching
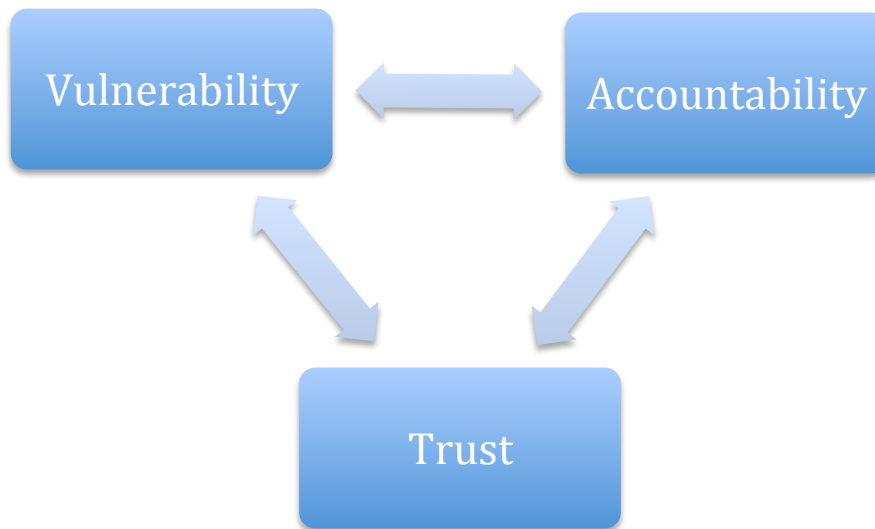
The Model for Sustaining and Enhancing Social Justice Teaching positions trust at the bottom to indicate that it is the foundation of the model. Trust allowed teachers to be vulnerable

and willing to be held accountable. Vulnerability and accountability are the key mechanisms of the model and mutually complement and reinforce one another. A teacher being vulnerable often exposed a weakness in their teaching to the group. The members of the group would then hold her or him accountable by providing meaningful support to improve their teaching. The following findings suggest that sustaining and enhancing social justice teaching is possible when people trust each other, are vulnerable with one another, and hold themselves accountable.

Trust

Throughout the observations and interviews, it became evident that the CIG created a community of like-minded educators that trusted one another. The CIG space was distinct because educators voluntarily gathered in an out-of-school space where they were able to share their political and pedagogical views freely. This distinction separated it from pre-service teacher education and in-service teacher preparation programs, because unlike the CIG, educators were mandated to attend and be among other educators that may or may not share similar political beliefs or pedagogical goals.

In other teacher spaces, such as pre-service preparation programs and in-service professional development sessions, educators stated that they had to be careful about sharing their politics and ideas on teaching. For example, in an interview with Mika, she stated the following about her school: "There is a lack of teacher collaboration and like-minded teacher philosophy. I don't fully trust other teachers to collaborate". She shared that she felt isolated at her school, something many of her CIG peers also echoed. CIG members further mentioned that teacher colleagues were indifferent and uninterested in co-planning social justice lessons. Additionally, they mentioned that professional development (PD) meetings at their schools did not provide an opportunity to have critical conversations around politics or pedagogy. In at least one case, Dan an English teacher was told by an assistant principal not to teach a lesson related

to the protest in Ferguson. Incidents like these resulted in CIG members being hesitant, and often wary about collaborating with faculty at their school sites. Conversely, the participants mentioned their *trust* with fellow CIG members' in sharing their politics and pedagogy. Dan explained:

> CIG is very different because I know the folks and I trust their politics and their pedagogy, too. That's a huge difference because PD's are arranged by the [school] district. I'm always wondering, 'do you really know what goes on in the classroom? Are you really all about social justice?' But then with the CIG, there is trust among the folks.

Unlike his school site, Dan trusted the politics of the CIG members. The CIG allowed Dan to speak freely with like-minded colleagues due to the deliberate political space and membership of the CIG. His quote also indicates that because he trusted his peers, he is more willing to collaborate with CIG members than peers at his school site.

It is important to note that while participants had similar views on politics and teaching, they were not a monolithic group of teachers. Lucia explained this point below.

> I would say a lot of us are similar in our political beliefs but we all arrive there through different paths. Even when Robert and I speak, we're coming at it from different ways and we believe the same things but sometimes we have to clarify for each other.

Lucia states that even though teachers were like-minded, there were still instances when their views on teaching and politics required clarification to the group. While teachers at times had differences of opinion, the participants seemed to trust one another and collaborated toward improving their ability to teach for social justice.

Vulnerability

Trust was a critical factor for teachers to be vulnerable within the CIG. Throughout inquiry group meetings, I often observed members being vulnerable with each other and expressing concerns, obstacles, or even shortcomings in their teaching. As previously mentioned being vulnerable operated to strengthen a participant's ability to teach for social justice. The CIG

structure and its members modeled vulnerability and affirmed honest dialogue. Members did not

shut down or ostracize a member because she or he revealed that they were grappling with their

teaching. Instead the CIG positioned social justice teaching as an ongoing process, which

required members to be vulnerable with one another.

The CIG intentionally highlighted that teaching for social justice was a process. As

previously mentioned in the objectives of the CIG, teachers are invited to engage in a process to

"become more critical educators." As a result, teachers in the group were expected to view their

teaching as developing and at times having to be open to admitting that they needed help. Clyde

shares, "The CIG is a community, it's okay to be like, 'hey, you know what, I'm still struggling

with some of this stuff.'" Clyde suggests that the CIG operated as a space for educators to work

through social justice teaching and practical dilemmas. The "I'm still struggling" approach was

common practice within the CIG. It allowed members to reflect and state where they were at in

developing as a social justice educator to then improve their teaching practice.

A key way that teachers were vulnerable was through the curriculum presentation. As

previously mentioned, the curriculum presentation had a presenter share a unit of study that they

wanted feedback on to improve a certain aspect of their teaching or the unit itself. Below, Lucia

describes the moment when she was first asked to present her curriculum.

> The second time I went to the CIG, people were like, "do you want to present next time?"
> Which is super scary, but it's that vulnerability, that it's important to [be] building with
> people … CIG is structured in that way so that people have to present at some point ...
> after you present, that's when you feel like you're part of CIG.

Lucia highlights that regardless of time spent in the CIG or in the classroom, teachers were asked

to present their curriculum and to be vulnerable with the group. She later mentioned that she was

surprised when they asked her to present since at time she was a first year teacher. Although

presenting to the group was "super scary" for Lucia, she recognized the benefits to being

vulnerable, such as "building" curriculum and relationships with like-minded individuals.

Lucia's quote infers that that the CIG allowed participants to be vulnerable with one another.

It is important to note that the CIG also provided certain safety nets to ensure that

members felt safe while being vulnerable during the curriculum presentation. As previously

mentioned in Chapter Four, the CIG curriculum presentation had a feedback protocol. The

protocol asked each presenter to provide feedback questions to guide audience members'

comments. These protocols were put in place to ensure audience members were being

supportive and not aggressive in delivering criticism. Instead it allowed the audience to focus on

how they can best support their colleague. After presenting to the group, Omara explained how

these protocols supported her: "It's a really vulnerable process to present a unit to people … so, I

appreciate I'm able to have some control." She then stated that this approach counters harsh

teacher evaluations rubrics that many of her colleagues and herself have had to endure. She said:

> No, I don't want you to view this [unit] through the lens of whether I've measured my objectives through every step of the way. Or I don't want you to use this to tell me if I checked for understanding enough or whatever. I want you to look at this to tell me what other ways I can support my white students when we're having these discussions about privileged and dominant groups. I want you to focus on how well I'm building community throughout this unit. I get to define the areas that I'm interested in growing in.

Instead of opening herself up to an open critique session from an administrator who was also

assessing her teaching, Omara was able to "define the areas that [she] is interested in growing in"

with the support of like-minded peers. As a result, feedback was specific to enhance an

educator's social justice teaching practice and their desired goal. This did not mean that

feedback was free from critique or being held accountable; instead, accountability was guided.

The following section will explain how CIG members held themselves and their peers

accountable.

Accountability

In this study, vulnerability was supported and reinforced by accountability. As previously mentioned, accountability was a way that participants supported or were being supported to teach for social justice. Throughout CIG meetings, I often witnessed accountability occurring when members would alert their peers of blind spots in their teaching, by offering advice and constructive criticism.

Several participants mentioned that the CIG helped keep them accountable in a way that worked to teach for social justice. For example, Clyde described that the CIG's like-minded colleagues support his desire to teach for social justice, specifically from a de-colonial framework.

> I want to have those conversations, where I can work through what is decolonization and then what does it look like to be for me, a white teacher in a 97% Latino school. What does that mean for me and how can I use a decolonial pedagogy. And I need support of folks to think through that. One, to check [me] and two, to just help me work through that. And also to help other folks work through, maybe a different question.

In the excerpt above, Clyde acknowledged that as a White male developing decolonial lessons for Latina/o students, he has inherent blind spots. He asked the group to "check" or verbally redirect him if he is not teaching from a decolonial perspective. He seems to indicate that he feels reassured that the CIG membership, who are mostly educators of color and also drawing from a decolonial framework, will hold him accountable of his desire to teach a decolonial pedagogy. Clyde also suggest that there was also a group accountability within the CIG, when he said, "help other folks work through, maybe a different question" so they could be supported to teach for social justice.

During the May CIG meeting, a new teacher, Allyson presented a unit that she co-taught in a US history class. The unit's focus was to awaken students' critical consciousness by examining the 1960's civil rights movement, while also utilizing youth participatory action

research (YPAR) to make modern day connections. During the clarifying questions section of the curriculum presentation, Omara and Allyson had a brief interaction that displays the ways that accountability worked within the group:

Omara: From what I'm hearing and what I saw in the presentation, my impression is that a lot of the discussion revolved around racial oppression in particular or class oppression. Were there discussions about gender or homophobia, or religious oppression?

Allyson: No, it was mostly about class and racial oppression … something I've been reflecting on is how do I facilitate a space where students can challenge their homophobia. Because for me, I'm not really comfortable taking that step, to allow students to engage in that dialogue so that's what I've been reflecting on throughout the year.

The excerpt above was typical of how accountability often occurred. In the excerpts, Omara provided Allyson a non-judgmental comment that seems to illuminate a blind spot in her teaching, such as including an analysis on "gender," "homophobia," and "religious persecution." Allyson later states that she has been reflecting on how she could challenge homophobia in her classroom, yet she also said, "I'm not really comfortable taking that step." Her comments suggest that Omara' comment is having her further reflect on how to move towards achieving her goal of challenging homophobia through her teaching.

Accountability also occurred during the reading discussions. There was an occasion when Omara interrupted a reading discussion and pushed the group to unpack an assertion in a reading that seemed questionable. She critiqued a CIG assigned text that made the assertion that utilizing critical media and discussion led to youth moving toward critical consciousness. She responded, "I do that in my class and it doesn't feel that my students are developing critical consciousness … [the example] sounds so neat and perfect … everyone went with the flow … it doesn't look like that in real life." She later posed the following question for the group to consider, "how do we engage our students in an education for critical consciousness?" Following her comments, teachers then shared the obstacles that they face in addressing critical content and thinking with

their students. This comment was significant because it moved the discussion away from the romantic narratives of social justice education in urban schools. Instead, a complex dialogue followed that had educators reflect on their teaching context and also share strategies that have allowed them to engage in critical conversations with youth.

The following section will bring together the three parts of the model for sustaining and enhancing social justice teaching through an in-depth example that was documented throughout the yearlong study.

In-Depth Example: Third World Feminism, Genders Studies, and Queer Theory

As mentioned above, a model for sustaining and enhancing social justice teaching included trust, vulnerability, and accountability, however, these components did not occur in isolation but were intertwined. The second half of this chapter will display how a model for sustaining and enhancing social justice teaching operated throughout an academic school year by highlighting one participant, Robert an Ethnic Studies teacher in his ninth year of teaching.

During an interview, Robert revealed that he was experiencing his most difficult year in teaching due to external school issues. Prior to the academic school year, the school he taught at caught fire causing him to travel between the school's main campus and an off campus site to teach his students. There was also a sharp increase in school violence and student resistance. The school also had a new inexperienced administrator with whom he did not see eye to eye. The in-depth example, will explain how the CIG help to sustain his teaching throughout a challenging school year and also enhance his ability to create and teach a unit titled *Third World Feminism, Gender Studies, and Queer Theory.*

October: "I'm Trying to Challenge Myself This Year." During the first CIG meeting of the academic year in September, participants indicated that they sought to provide a more inclusive curriculum for their LGBTQ and CIS-Gender students and to better address

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homophobia and hetero-normativity in their classroom. Various CIG members admitted that

they had not explored these themes in their teaching yet sought to include them in their

curriculum. As a result, teachers decided in the September meeting that the following month's

meeting topic would be queer pedagogy. They agreed to read two texts, the first focused on

"queer theory and pedagogy" (Britzman, 1995) and the second on "queering the curriculum"

(RS, 2014) to gain a deeper understanding of queer pedagogy and classroom application.

During the October meeting, members began the reading discussion by participating in a

pre-discussion chalk talk activity, which included writing on large chart paper the main ideas,

themes, and discussion questions developed from the readings. Various questions were posted

from defining queer pedagogy, identifying classroom strategies, developing a safe environment,

and brainstorming lessons/unit plans. Two questions were taken from the butcher paper and

selected to lead the discussion. The first question read, "what is queer pedagogy?" This

question was selected because various members stated that they wanted to further "unpack the

reading" due to the unfamiliar and complex content within the texts. The second question came

from Robert, he wrote the following on the butcher paper:

> Is it okay to connect feminist theory and queer theory together in the same unit of study?
> For example, the women's liberation movement with the gay rights movement? Help
> student read scholars like Audre Lorde, Gloria Anzaldua as a way to understand feminist
> and queer theory? Intersectionality?

The excerpt above displays Robert's vulnerability, specifically the way that he is wrestling with

the reading and incorporating queer pedagogy in his classroom. This question is the first of

many, in a series of events throughout the academic year that illuminates the way teachers

engaged in the model for sustaining and enhancing social justice teaching.

After the group worked through their understanding of queer pedagogy, the conversation

shifted to Robert's question on combining feminism and queer theory. Robert began by

acknowledging that he wrote the second question and then said, "I'm ashamed to say that

although I've talked about LGBT issues in the classroom, I've never problematized that phrase and centered a unit of study for it. So, I'm trying to challenge myself this year." He then reiterated the following question, "should I focus on feminism and LGBTQ issues separately or together?" As one of the most veteran CIG teachers, Robert is known for developing curriculum that engages in critical theory and analysis. However, the excerpt above exposes his willingness to be vulnerable with the group and reveal a weakness in his teaching. At the risk of people critiquing him or passing judgment, his purpose was to "challenge" his teaching and to be held accountable to his desire to include gender and queer perspectives in his teaching. What followed were teachers holding Robert accountable by sharing classroom obstacles, strategies, and possibilities to incorporate a queer pedagogy.

In response, one of the participants agreed that Robert should use the narrative of Audre Lorde. Lorde's "narrative" and intersectionality, as a queer-feminist-woman-of-color "brings out a lot more than gay marriage. [It] brings up so many issues" that transgress the way the LGBTQ movement is positioned. Another participant also agreed that authors, such as Gloria Anzaldua extend gender and sexuality shift the focus away from solely white narratives. These comments affirmed Robert's desire to combine the unit, yet also provided an additional analysis for him to frame the unit and specific lessons.

The conversation continued with participants stating that teachers need to move beyond gay marriage and love, as the main argument for the LGBTQ rights. Instead there is a need to focus on the politics of sexism and homophobia, such as the policing of gender roles and the way that queer people are marginalized. A student teacher explained how his guiding teacher used a problematic media clip that re-inscribed gendered stereotypes. He commented to Robert the need to have a theory talk about LGBTQ issues with his students to avoid reinforcing stereotypes. The conversation ended with participants stating that feminism and LGBTQ issues

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should not be a sole unit but should be a central theme integrated throughout the year, such as race and class is often positioned for various CIG members. After the discussion, Dan presented a unit plan on the book *Always Running* by Luis Rodriguez. He requested feedback that aligned with the CIG's monthly theme, specifically on ways that he can engage in "queering the curriculum" and challenge the books inherent heterosexism and homophobia. As a result, the October's CIG meeting included rich theoretical, pedagogical, and curricular discussions that also offered practical examples of how to utilize a queer pedagogy framework.

The topic and reading of queer pedagogy provided a theoretical starting point and encouraged him to develop a unit on feminism and queer theory. Robert's willingness to be vulnerable provided an opening to have CIG members keep him accountable to teaching a unit on gender and queer theory. He engaged in an insightful conversation and received pedagogical and instructional resources on how he could construct a unit combining the topics of feminism and LGBTQ issues. Moreover, he was affirmed that his initial curricular ideas were heading in a direction that provided a more critical and comprehensive approach to LGBTQ issues. In the following months, Robert would build from the discussion and resources that were shared in the CIG meeting to create a unit combining feminism and queer theory.

February: "To hold me accountable … then I'll actually do it." Toward the middle of the academic year, Robert asked the CIG, if he could present the newly created unit to the group. In an interview he revealed that the main motivator for presenting to the CIG was "to hold me accountable. If I'm gong to present to the CIG, then I'll actually do it." As a result, he volunteered to ensure that he would develop and teach the unit. During the February CIG meeting, Robert presented a unit titled *Third World Feminism, Gender Studies, and Queer Theory.* The unit built off the conversation in the October CIG, where he expressed his interest in developing a unit on Feminism and LGBTQ identities and the dialogue that followed. More

specifically, Robert drew from the groups' validation to combine feminism and queer theory into a unit of study.

The curriculum presentation started with Robert sharing some opening words. He stated that the unit was a work in progress and then described how he arrived to the point of developing the unit. Robert's comments provide a glimpse into the ways that a model of sustaining and enhancing social justice teaching involves vulnerability. He said:

> Just wanted to begin by recognizing some of the struggles that I've had … I've been teaching for nine years and a part of the inquiry group space is being vulnerable and being honest with each other and I'm sorry to say that in those nine years I've not done a very good job of including women and queer theory into my pedagogy.

Similar to the October meeting, Robert acknowledged that while he is one of the most veteran teachers in the CIG, he also has areas of growth. It is also significant that he reminded the group that the CIG is a safe space to be vulnerable and have honest dialogue around teaching. The words below immediately followed, which explain the barriers that have prevented him from including a gender and queer analysis into his curriculum:

> It may be even from a place of feeling uncomfortable as a heterosexual male breaking this down to my students. So it's really helpful to get ideas from you all and I want you to know that I'm a hundred percent welcome of feedback because there is a lot of places that I know I need to grow and learn in the way I communicate and talk about gender and sexuality but also especially how I break it down to my students. I've kind of shied away from it in the past but I don't want to anymore. I want to figure out how to center it in the years to come at the beginning of the year and as something that is foundational.

Again, it appears as if Robert is being vulnerable. He expresses that he has struggled with his own sexist and homophobic beliefs, which have prevented him from teaching a unit on gender or queer issues. He is trusting the group to hold him accountable, when he states, "I'm a hundred percent welcome of feedback because there is a lot places that I know I need to grow and learn to talk about gender and sexuality." He then closes with a powerful declaration to the group, while he has "shied away" from gender and queer perspectives in the past, he doesn't "want to" neglect these discussions "anymore."

During the rest of the presentation Robert shared a unit overview, curriculum resources and lessons, and the context of his 12th grade Ethnic Studies course. He first dispersed and explained the unit overview, unit reader, and lesson plans. Most of Robert's units included a college-style reader for his high school students that contained a unit overview, supplemental readings, activities, and other resources. The unit overview explained his goals with the learning segment:

> I want to create a unit that allows students to connect and build on their critical understanding of how race, class, gender, sexuality, and ethnicity shape our lives in the society that we live in. Furthermore, I want to help my students develop a critical analysis of how the intersections between these identities creates a more complex and nuanced understanding of who we are. Understanding that capitalist exploitation, patriarchy, racism, homophobia, and heteronormativity are all deeply connected to the negative impact of colonialism on the world and particularly on people in the so called "Third World" helps us to make broader connections to our views of social justice.

The unit overview describes the ways that Robert developed a unit to integrate gender and sexuality to further build on student understanding of oppression and social issues. He also framed that the purpose of the unit was to gain, "a more complex and nuanced understanding of who we are" to then, "make broader connections to our views of social justice." The excerpt highlights that the unit was an attempt to further develop student understanding of self and gain political clarity so they can better work toward social justice. After the overview, he listed the unit's proposed essential questions, which provides more insight on the ways he was trying to engage in social justice teaching.

1. How do Third World Feminist, Gender Studies and Queer Studies scholars help us to develop theoretical lenses to challenge these systems of oppression and develop intersectionality as a way to bridge our similarities in how we are dealing with racism, colonialism, patriarchy, homophobia, and heteronormativity?
2. What does it mean to be a feminist or a feminist ally?
3. How can we use our knowledge to take real concrete action to challenge these types of oppression in our everyday lives, at our school, and in the larger community and society?

The first question suggests that Robert is incorporating theoretical frameworks to highlight intersectionality and the way that oppression operates. Moreover, the second and third questions seem to have students reflect on the way that people can work for gender equality and to then, challenge them to work for social change. The unit overview seems to provide insight to the theoretical, pedagogical, and curricular framing of the unit. In the rest of the presentation, Robert asked the audience to provide input on lesson plans, ideas on developing an action-research assessment, and help him work through other pedagogical questions.

Robert began explaining his sequence of lessons and asked the audience for input. The five lesson sequence included the following themes 1) women's involvement in social movements; 2) intersectionality or intersecting identity and oppression; 3) comparing third world feminism to White or Western feminism; 4) male privilege and patriarchy; and 5) re-thinking the perceived goals of the LGBTQ movement, such as the desire for LGBTQ marriage and inclusivity in the military. Robert shared his lesson ideas, readings, and media. For example, for the first lessons, he shared a lesson plan titled Women's Work: *An Untold Story of the Civil Rights Movement* (Menkart, Murray, & View, 2004). He later said that: "I am looking for ideas for final assessments for this unit. What are ways that I can get students to share their learning and their research with each other or with the school community?" He was specifically interested in receiving advice on developing a "youth participatory action research" summative assessment or project.

He was also candid about the fact that he was still thinking through certain assertions in his lesson. For example, he said that he struggled conceptually about whether or not he and his male students could identify as a "feminist" or should they distinguish themselves as a "feminist ally." He also, asked for feedback on how to engage his mostly male students in acknowledging their male privilege. Robert then ended the unit by expressing the dilemma of whether he should

acknowledge or silence the voices of a few male conservative students in the class. He said, "I always have a problem with allowing sexist, patriarchal ideologies, pop up." Clarifying questions and then audience feedback followed his presentation.

During the audience feedback section, Robert vigorously took notes on his computer. Once again, the CIG participants held him accountable to his teaching by highlighting curricular blind spot and providing advice in response to his suggested feedback requests. Participants' feedback included readings, media, resources, curricular ideas, and contact information for several local and national activist organizations. The reading suggestions included text that displayed women involvement in social movements, examining masculinity and patriarchy, and the rise of neo-liberalism and downfall of progressive demands within the LGBTQ movement (see Brown, 2015; Duggan, 2012; Gonzalez, 1996; hooks, 2004). Additionally, videos were shared that depicted Pre-Columbian Native American society, as being matriarchal and individuals performing more than one gender-identity.

In addition, various suggestions were provided for the final assessment, such as, an oral history, zine (student created magazine), survival manual, community inquiry project, etc. Participants mentioned that he should consider having students explore feminism and queer theory from a familiar woman of color. For example, one member of the group said that it would be useful for the students to interview a mother or another significant woman in their home to make feminism relevant to students' lives. She recommended that the interview topics should revolve around feminism and other intersecting identities. Another participant suggested that the interview project should provide student choice to decide, "whom they wanted to interview and what topics." This option could expand the project to also include queer voices.

After the participants' feedback, Robert shared some thoughts on the audience feedback and said the following:

When else do you get the opportunity to get this many ideas all at once? It's really a privilege. … It is really powerful to get these original and creative ideas and also the validation. I got a lot of specific ideas for each lesson … and all the ideas. I feel much more confident owning my own un-comfortableness because it's a challenge for all of us, thank you.

Robert's comments provide insight to the value of being vulnerable to the group and asking like-minded educators to keep his teaching accountable to his curricular goals. The experience not only held him accountable to teach the unit but also provided the encouragement that he should go forward and teach the unit. After the curriculum presentation I asked him what he gained from CIG members' feedback, he said the following:

Well, one was people validating like, "You need to be teaching this. Don't second-guess yourself. If you don't know, that's okay." So, after the CIG, I got emails from two or three members of the CIG that was like, "Robert, I just want to thank you for being vulnerable, and I think that vulnerability that you shared with us, about your uncomfortable-ness with your approach to this topic as a man, as a heterosexual male, teaching about gender privilege, and teaching about male privilege, that the fact that you're willing to say, 'This is what I want to teach and this is what I'm uncomfortable with' is something that you should be okay with sharing with your students."

The excerpt above demonstrates the encouragement that Robert received from his peers and also illuminated how the audience benefitted from his willingness to be vulnerable. In addition to being validated, his peers also reassured him that he should also be vulnerable to his students to allow them to work through their own sexism and homophobia. The following section will describe the teaching that resulted from the Third World Feminism, Gender Studies, and Queer Theory unit.

June: "I learned that I am a Feminist. At the end of the year, I interviewed Robert and he described the Third World Feminism Unit. He explained that he did maintain the same focus and sequence of lessons that he presented to the CIG. In addition, he took the advice of the CIG to develop an interview project as the final assessment. Below he explains,

One of the ideas that I got [from the presentation] was to have students do an interview with an inspiring woman in their life, and talk to them about feminist issues, and talk to them about experiences, their migration stories, their struggles and triumphs growing up, and that was floating in the air. I didn't know that I was going do that, but it actually came to the students and I said, look, "Here's what we're learning. We're doing this feminist unit, there's a few ways that we can end this right. We could do presentations on different women leaders, we could write an essay, or we could do this interview project."

The students unanimously chose the interview project, in which he then developed a comprehensive summative assessment. The interview project provided the opportunity to further explore the contents of the unit, while incorporating the narrative and experience of someone who was significant in their life.

The interview project asked students to "interview an inspiring woman in your life." They had freedom to interview whom they wanted to interview, although, students were encouraged to consider their mother. Robert mentioned that the purpose of the project was to understand the interviewee's experience with sexism and patriarchy and to gain insight on how they viewed feminism and Women's rights. Students were also encouraged to consider interviewees who identified as being queer, although only one student from the class did. After the interview, students' had to transcribe five minutes of the interview, write a short essay on what they learned, and create a power-point (PPT). The PPT included a biography, explanation on why they chose the person, interview questions asked, what they learned from the interview, and present a five-minute audio of the interview. At the end of the unit, the students completed another essay prompt on what they learned in the unit and were given another opportunity to reflect on the interview project.

Robert informed me that a few students resisted the project, one student specifically, argued that she didn't have anyone significant to interview. However, after some consideration she interviewed her mother and the project turned out to be a powerful experience for the

student. The excerpt below is the opening paragraph to the essay, in which the student introduces the interviewee.

> My Nigerian queen, woman of God, mother of three, father of three occasionally, my mother. I chose to interview her for multiple reasons. She loves being listened to. Her story of faith and perseverance is worth sharing. Her struggles have inspired me to desire to be half the woman that she is …

According to Robert, although the student struggled to choose someone to interview, when she finally sat down with her mother she realized how much her mother has sacrificed for her and how inspirational she has been to her. Robert said that the student gained a deep appreciation for her mother while exploring the topic of gender. At the end of the year, students were asked to complete an end of the year reflection. The same student then explained the significance of the interview project and the unit on Third World Feminism, Gender Studies, and Queer Theory. She wrote:

> This school year I learned that I am a feminist. I've always advocated for equal rights of both men and women but I hadn't realized that there was a specific name or movement until I got to this class. The feminist unit had the most impact on me because of the close relationship that resulted, afterwards with my mother, and the ideas that we're being perpetuated by women that are all around society … This class enhanced my knowledge about my history and made me value who I was and where I came from…

Thus, it appears that the interview project provided an opportunity for Robert to address the topics of sexism, patriarchy, and feminism while, including the perspective of significant women in their lives. Moreover, this approach appeared to also have the student gain a deep appreciation for her mother, while also developing an analysis on gender and queer issues that complimented her belief in "equal rights."

Significance: Sustaining and Enhancing Social Justice Teaching

While Robert had a desire to develop a feminist and queer theory unit, his participation in the CIG moved the idea of having a unit, to share a rough draft of the unit, to then engaging in social justice teaching.   It is important to remind the reader that the sequence of the events

described above, came at Robert's most difficult year as a teacher. The findings suggest that the unit was possible because of the model of sustaining and enhancing social justice teaching. Robert trusted his peers and was vulnerable, which allowed for the CIG to hold him accountable to achieve his goal of teaching a unit that combined feminism and queer theory. As a result, Robert benefitted from the CIG reading on queer pedagogy, advice from his peers, specifically, the culminating assessment, and the validation and support. This process and unit of study may not have been possible without Robert engaging in trust, vulnerability, and accountability. This process led him to incorporate new theoretical and pedagogical frameworks to further engage students in social justice education. He challenged his own embedded notions of sexism, patriarchy, and homophobia while also asking his students to do the same. In the end, trust, vulnerability, and accountability assisted in sustaining and enhancing his ability to teach for social justice.

The in-depth example used in this chapter is of a single CIG member, although various members may have engaged in the model for sustaining and enhancing social justice teaching, Robert was the most evident. Robert's transparency throughout the yearlong study allowed me to document the way he trusted the group, was vulnerable, and was held accountable. It is important to remind the reader of Solórzano and Delgado-Bernal's (2001) concept of internal transformative resistance. Often time's transformational resistance is not documented because it is occurring internally and is not exposed to the naked eye. Likewise, the model of sustaining and enhancing social justice teaching may have also impacted other teachers, in a way that was not as apparent. The following chapter will look more closely at what occurred in the case study's classrooms and they ways they worked to engage in social justice teaching.

Chapter 6: Social Justice Teaching as a Process

This study examined a critical inquiry group's impact on social justice educators' ability to teach for social justice in secondary schools. There were two areas of focus, the way teachers were supported within the critical inquiry group (CIG) and the way teachers engage in social justice teaching. This chapter focuses on the latter, specifically, the way that teachers in the study were engaging in social justice teaching within their urban secondary classrooms. Six critical inquiry group members were the focus of the study. These participants ranged across the teaching experience spectrum from being in their first year, having taught for a few years, to some participants having almost a decade of teaching experience. Throughout the case study, I examined the participants' social justice teaching and classroom practice. The findings suggest that social justice teaching is a process. Regardless of years spent in the classroom, all participants employed the following three characteristics of social justice teaching: 1) *humanizing classroom culture,* balancing classroom structures and relationships to engage in social justice practice; 2) *merging academic and critical literacy*, connecting academic skills and subject matter content with social justice topics that connected to students' culture and community; and 3) *inquiry and action oriented projects*; drawing from research to advance course content and engage in social action.

The chapter will begin by explaining the participants humanizing classroom culture. In this section, I will highlight the ways that teachers developed and employed classroom procedures and rules that were not punitive but instead sought to create a humanizing classroom culture that valued and centered students input yet also created an environment of mutual respect and group accountability. In addition, the participants developed caring relationships with students. The second section focuses on merging academic and critical literacy with more of an emphasis on classroom instruction. A key point of emphasis will be the teachers deliberate

planning and teaching that integrated various social justice topics into the content standards that provided meaningful learning for urban school students. At the end of this section, an in-depth teaching example is provided to further showcase the way one particular teacher brought together academic and critical literacy.

The third section is closely connected to the previous and illustrates how teachers used research and inquiry to advance course learning and engage in social action. Inquiry and action oriented projects were often part of a comprehensive summative assessment that involved student investigation of their community, culture, or social issues. These projects were often used as a step for the classroom to engage in social action. Similar to the last section, an in-depth example will be provided to demonstrate a teacher using research to engage students in activism. The chapter will conclude with a discussion on social justice being a process. The findings suggest that the participants, regardless of years in the classroom engaged in social justice teaching and were constantly in a process of improving their practice.

Humanizing Classroom Culture

All of the teachers in the study were seemingly deliberate about organizing the classroom and curriculum to provide a humanizing education for their students. It was evident from classroom observations that the participants developed and employed classroom procedures and rules that were not punitive but instead sought to create a humane classroom culture that valued students input yet also created an environment of mutual respect and group accountability. Procedures and rules were balanced with developing relationships and trust with students. Developing relationships with students required them to enact humility and vulnerability to further develop a social justice classroom culture.

Structuring classroom culture. To begin, structuring classroom culture was necessary to not only engage in social justice teaching but to also engage the class in social justice practice. All of the participants said that they structured classroom culture by building community and trust with students through the curriculum. At the beginning of the school year, several of the teachers stated that they structured their classroom culture by creating units and lessons to create community with students. Throughout the rest of the year, they reminded students of the classroom culture and also developed procedures and norms to further support a humanizing culture, which was critical to engage in social justice teaching and practice.

Each teacher developed a classroom culture that supported his or her social justice pedagogy. For example, in Omara's English classroom, "identity" was central to her teaching. She explains below:

> For the kind of topics that I'm interested in exploring with students around identity and how our identities shape the way we perceive the world … it takes so much personal reflection and trust … so because of that intense vulnerability, I try to build community really quickly at the very beginning of the year and also really intensely.

As the excerpt above mentions, engaging in critical topics and discussions requires that students trust one another and feel comfortable being vulnerable. To build a sense of community, at the beginning of the year, Omara taught a unit that required students to develop and share their personal narrative with the class. However, Omara also recognized that if she was going to ask students to share personal information, she too had to be an active participant and model the personal narrative activity. She said:

> So I made my own (personal narrative) and I presented it to them and I talk about all of the points on it and what those represented about me. So I "came out" to my students and I told them a little bit about my personal beliefs, my ethnic background, so they know some personal things about me. That was part of the community building also. I can't ask you all to be vulnerable with each other unless I'm going to be vulnerable with you too. But all of those things I just named they did it with each other.

All of the participants, similar to Omara, mentioned that they spent significant time throughout the year developing community and trusting relationships to further engage in social justice teaching and practice. In another example, Robert mentioned that he spent three weeks at the beginning of the year to put in place a social justice classroom culture. However, maintaining a humanizing classroom culture for Robert also required that he continued to remind students of that initial community building that occurred at the beginning of the school year. Below, he explains.

> I begin the year with three weeks of lessons to get us there. So I teach the kids the concept of In Lak'esh. It's something we recite … that's kind of the basis of where I try to teach the students where I'm coming from. … "If you respect me then you respect yourself. If I show you love then we're also loving ourselves."

In Lak'esh is a Mayan phrase that is interpreted as "you are my other me" and also known as a popularly poem by Luis Valdez that weaves Spanish and English language (Acosta & Mir, 2012). Robert said that he uses the poem with his students as an opening class ritual, done in a call and response manner. He also stated that he uses the poem to not only as an opening procedure but to also remind students of the classroom culture. During classroom observations, I did not see the poem posted yet I heard students recite it verbatim. It seems that the poem had been memorized by all of his students and part of the classroom culture.

Lucia's classroom culture included a deliberate stance on gender and challenged the inherit patriarchy in the Spanish language. She said, "in the beginning (of the school year), we talk about Spanish being very *machista* (patriarchal) in nature and how it genders everything." As a result, she said that she does not align gender with sex. For example, in my observation, I noticed that students were assigned to read the part of a character that may or may not align to their gender or sex. When I asked her about this, she said:

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My students don't even think about it, they notice, but they don't make a big deal of it, anytime that I assign different genders to different folks … [It's] what I feel I can do right now in terms of complicating gender and having a conversation around gender and sexuality.

Lucia's excerpt demonstrates the way she sought to have a classroom culture that was inclusive of gender and sexuality that became second nature.

In other classrooms, I also witnessed teachers reminding students of the classroom culture. For example, Mika said the following to the class, "those talking about prom, remember not all of us went … use inclusive language." In another classroom, a student told a peer, "you're gay." Robert then told the student, "please don't use gay" as an insult and continued with the lesson. These type of redirections were common among the participants, they would address a situation that violated the classroom culture but in a humane way. Because classroom culture had been built, it was not necessary to spend significant time addressing the situation; instead it often meant reminding students of the shared class culture.

Classroom procedures. The teachers in the study were also deliberate about having classroom procedures and norms that supported classroom culture. Some participants had classroom procedures and norms that involved a lot of structure and organization, while other participants' classrooms were less structured. Regardless of the level of structure, classroom procedures were student centered, and in some cases, involved student input. In addition, teachers at times, created classroom procedures that differed from their peers or in one case, stood in contrast to a school wide policy.

Classroom procedures were a way of maintaining a classroom culture but also provided an opportunity for the teachers to live out their social justice practice. Clyde, whom seemed to be the most procedure oriented of the participants, said the following: "I definitely try to not be punitive in how I re-direct students when they're not following the procedures but I do I feel like procedures are needed." He later said that while he's procedural oriented he is clear about why

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procedures are in place. He said, "I feel like it's super important to be transparent with the students to be like, 'This is why these procedures are set in place.'" Clyde also pointed out that teaching middle school students requires more structure than his peers who taught high school students.

While Clyde had firm procedures, he also said, "there's some degree of choice in what set of procedures they (students) want to do." For example, during a classroom observation, his students had just completed the state-mandated exams and he asked for student input on how they would like to sequence the period. He said that he changed the lesson because "I'm trying to respond to the signs that the students are giving so it's not all about 'you need to be in your desk quiet' all the time." Instead he mentioned his approach is "here's what I need done today, in the sense of progressing through a project 'let me help you get there.'" As result, this meant that at times he alters his lessons and adapts his teaching to meet student needs.

In direct contrast, throughout my observations Lucia seemed the least structured, yet had a strong command of her classroom. She said that rigid structures run counter to her teaching philosophy. More specifically, she stated, "I want to replicate community learning for my kids, it doesn't have a seating chart, it doesn't have a warm up." As a result, while she had classroom procedures, she deliberately involved students in creating and altering classroom procedures and rules. In an interview, she explained the discussions she had with students to involve them in structuring the class.

> I want to open it in a way that if they (students) want to say something like, "hey why don't we do it this way," that they could if they wanted to. And I tell them that too. I'm like "if you ever have a better idea than I do, let me know and let's engage in that." Very rarely do they ever take me up on that but I try to make sure that door is open.

While the teachers ranged from being from highly to loosely structure, all of the participants had set procedures that displayed their effort to be humane.

Several of the teachers, employed classroom policies that differed from their school site colleagues. For example, Omara and Lucia had an open bathroom policy. Lucia explains that the policy simply meant, "they can go to the bathroom when they want to go to the bathroom." Students were not required to ask for permission, instead if they needed to go to the restroom, drink water, or take a break they had the ability to grab the hall pass and step outside. Omara said that they developed the open bathroom policy because of the "personal beliefs that [we] have about students' freedoms and rights as people." She later said,

> I've tried my best to reiterate over and over that you don't have to ask me for permission to use the bathroom. Please just go. Take care of yourself. Because that practice (bathroom policy) is not adopted across the board at our school, my students forget and still ask me for permission.

Due to school administrative pressure, however, Lucia and Omara did have to alter their bathroom policy. Originally, more than one student could leave the classroom but they had to adopt a bathroom pass so that only one student could use the bathroom pass, at a given time.

At another school, a teacher strongly objected to her schools' tardy sweep policy and refused to enforce it. At Mika's school, the tardy policy was strictly enforced and required teachers that when the bell rang they had to close their classroom doors and not let students enter the class. Students who were "late" and not in class were then rounded up by security and disciplined and then sent back to class, if at all. Mika explains that she took a different approach to a student being late because, "they're taking like 3 buses here … most students who are late, they made the effort to be there but also there's a thousand other things on their mind that got them from coming on time." As a result, she did not shut students out, instead she left the door slightly ajar. It is important to note that she did have an alternative tardy policy. She said, "when they're late, I don't mark them late. They fill in a tardy slip. Which is basically a check in slip with them. Where they have to write a response to one of these questions." For example,

one of the tardy slip questions asked, "how can a teacher keep you encouraged and engaged in school?"

In an interview, Mika mentioned that the school has an interim principal and she does not know how long she will be able sustain her tardy policy. She said,

> I'm going to be screwed next year because I have made my students know that I do keep my door open, during tardy policies. They are able to come in late and that I don't really mark them (tardy) but they have to do the (tardy) slips after. I've been called out by [the teachers' union] for making it a haven and not following the school policies.

As a result of the anticipated change in school leadership and the teacher's union concern over school safety, she has considered revising her tardy policy. Similar to Mika, many of the teachers mentioned that their classroom culture often times did not reflect the larger school culture. The examples of classroom procedures seem to suggest that for the participants it was important to structure a humanizing classroom culture, which worked in tandem with they way they taught for social justice.

Relationships and classroom culture. Classroom culture was further developed and maintained through the development of relationship and trust with students. All teachers, even those who were more structured, balanced procedures and rules with caring relationships with students. For example, Clyde said, that his classroom management style has two main components, "having systems in place so the kids know what to expect … and then also relationships. So I feel like if [I'm] able to build those two or connect those two, [I]'ll be good." In this quote, Clyde best explained the way that the participants approached their classrooms with a healthy balance of structure and relationships to have a humanizing classroom.

Relationships were central for the participants to further engage students in social justice teaching. In the excerpt below, Omara explained that social justice teaching is interconnected with trusting teacher-student relationships. She said,

The biggest part of the social justice piece is the way I run my classroom and my interactions with students and the way that I build relationships with them ... I intentionally work to do activities that feel humanizing.

Omara's excerpt explains that for her, social justice teaching and practice is not only based on the curriculum but the way the classroom is organized and the way students feel in the classroom. The word humanizing and trust was often brought up when I asked teachers about their classroom culture.

During an interview, Lucia further explained the importance of trust and the way that she develops trust through everyday interactions with students. She explains, that the simple act of pulling up a chair and having a conversation with a student can build trust.

I'm sitting down here because I really want to be with you (student) and I want to hang out with you. I know that you're supposed to be doing work but this is my chance to come and say hi to you and to be in your physical space, as much as you let me. Allow me to engage with you. Even if it's just for a stupid comment but those are what create trust and intimacy in a classroom of twenty-seven, twenty-eight (students).

As Lucia mentioned developing trust can occur during one-on-one interactions and letting students know "I want to hang out with you." Similar to Lucia, the participants mentioned that building trust with students required that they had to invest time in developing meaningful relationships.

While the participants expressed that they sought to develop trusting relationships, they also said that trust had to be reciprocal. For example, Omara said that trust was necessary for her to have an open bathroom policy. She said,

I made it clear to them (students) when you step out of this class, go handle your business, know that that's trust that I have in you. When you go out, you're representing me. I don't want a security guard to bring you back here telling me that you were trying to hop a fence or telling me that you were playing around with your friends and disrupting somebody else's class. Please don't let that happen because that will hurt our relationship.

Similar to Omara, while teachers displayed care, trust, and valued relationship building, they expected the same from their students.

According to the teachers, at times students did violate the classroom culture and did harm the relationship with their teacher. For example, Robert the most experienced teacher, mentioned that throughout his teaching career, he has had students that are openly defiant and said, "you have to be okay with that" and not take it personal. During classroom observations, I noticed that there was one student who was most disruptive in Robert's class. Yet I noticed during every classroom observation, Robert had a positive interaction with the student. I observed them talking about who would win in a one-on-one basketball game, cracking jokes, and once during an interview, the student wandered into the class because a teacher kicked him out of the class. When I asked Robert about the student, he said, "he just had a death in the family. His mother passed, so the way that I interact with him needs to be very positive, affirming and patient." Instead of treating the student as a "trouble-maker" and being punitive, Robert, similar to his peers made the conscious decision to show empathy and develop a relationship with the young man.

Humility. Throughout the study, I noticed that teachers were able to further develop relationships with students by enacting humility and being vulnerable. All of the participants mentioned that they worked to humanize themselves to their students. In my observations and interviews, this resulted in teachers having open and real conversations with students that at times displayed some vulnerability.

For example, Lucia said in an interview that she does not pretend to seem like she knows everything, instead she tells her students that "we're both learning." At times, the class may not go as planned and it's not uncommon to hear "it's okay Miss, you're new, you didn't know". She said in those interactions, she internalizes it as, her students acknowledging that she is "a person who is still figuring it out. And it allows them to be more compassionate with me and generous and likewise." Instead of acting as the "all knowing teacher," the excerpt above

suggest that she approaches teaching and her students as she "is still figuring it out," which allows the students and her to develop an understanding that they are growing together.

At times humility meant that teachers put themselves in the shoes of their students. At the end of the school year, Mika noticed that her 12th grade students seemed to be burnt out. As a result, she decided to share that she had similar feelings in her Master's program and used this moment to motivate students. Below is the exchange that she had with students.

Student A: We're burnt out!

KA: So you're burnt out?

Student B: Stressed.

Student C: Sick.

Student D: Hungry.

Student E: Trying to go home.

Student F: Waiting for school year to end …

Mika – This is the final stretch ... We're all in this together … with myself in my own (graduate) program … I'm so burnt out … While I'm stressed … I just finished fifty pages, I can see graduation, I have my last section that I need to do. We're living it. Make sure you thank the people that pushed you along … Think about what you need to do … I still want to see that energy as you're about to pass out … remind them that they supported you … hang in … you all are very close.

The excerpt above demonstrates Mika being vulnerable with her students and that she too is "burnt out" and "stressed" in her teacher education program, which seemed to humanize herself to the students. After the classroom observation, I asked her about the excerpt above and she said, "the only thing I could give them was (the advice to) just keep going, like just keep pushing … because that's what I have to tell myself." Mika's said that her comments were also meant to motivate students and remind them that they need to continue to honor those who have supported them in their education.

Humility also involved participants leaving themselves open to be "checked" and acknowledging when they made a mistake. For example, Clyde mentioned that respect in the classroom is mutual. He said, "we're going to respect each other and I'm part of that equation. Where if I'm not respecting you then I need to be checked." His comments suggest, that he must also live up the classroom expectation of respect. Another, participant, Omara, echoed his words and added that humility also meant admitting mistakes and taking action to repair a mistake. During an interview, Omara said that when she has a negative interaction with a student, she will ask herself, "was I disrespected (by a student) or was I feeling that my authority was being threatened?" She said that if it was the latter then she work to "find the language to then return to that student with humility and asking for forgiveness and recognizing what I did was not okay." Moreover, she stated, "I've learned a lot about being in-relationship with students and the authority and power struggle." Omara's excerpts suggest that she is utilizing humility as a strategy to ensure that she doesn't abuse her authority as a teacher.

In summary, the participants demonstrated a humanizing classroom culture that balanced structure and relationship building that was an integral part of teaching for social justice. The following sections, merging academic and critical literacy and inquiry and action oriented projects will focus less on classroom culture and more on the planning and instructional aspect of social justice teaching.

Merging Academic and Critical Literacy

All of the participants merged academic and critical literacy; connecting academic skills and subject matter content with social justice topics that connected to students' cultural and community. Teachers integrated academic literacy, specifically subject matter content standards, academic skill development, and research skills; with critical literacy, which involved providing a larger social significance to subject matter, such as deconstructing societal oppression and

providing opportunities to respond to oppression. Lastly, all of the participants integrated

scaffolds and supports to assist student learning.

The teachers were intentional about integrating equity-oriented themes into the content

standards. For example, Omara taught an 11th grade English unit on the novel *The Crucible* by

Arthur Miller. The unit built on Common Core ELA Standards, specifically, Reading Literature

11.6[14] and Writing 11.4[15]. Similar to the author's intention to critique McCarthyism, Omara

utilized the story of *The Crucible* to have student engage in a literary analysis to expose modern

day witch-hunts, such as Japanese internment during WWII, Rosewood Massacre, Holocaust,

Scottsboro Trial, Civil Rights Movement, and post September 11th. She was intentional about

balancing the content of the play and the larger societal importance of the play.

On the first day of classroom observations with Omara, she had an activity that explains

the way she merged academic and critical literacy. The exercise was a peer revision activity, in

which she told the students that when they review their peer's essay, they should focus on the

"ideas of the essay, does it make sense, organizing, proving thesis, explaining quotations, the

content." The students were then asked to schedule 15-minute appointments with their peers to

revise their writing. During the peer revision appointments, students read each other's writing

and provided suggestions. For example, during the observation, I heard various students provide

feedback, such as "your thesis is extremely well written" and "is that bad"? I heard students

being thoughtful in their response and provided suggestions and resources that could improve

their peer's writing and sharing resources, such as "move this (paragraph) to the beginning."

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[14] Common Core – English Language Arts/Literacy Standards – Reading Literature 11-12.4 - Analyze a case in which grasping a point of view requires distinguishing what is directly stated in a text from what is really meant (e.g., satire, sarcasm, irony, or understatement).

[15] Common Core – English Language Arts/Literacy Standards – Writing 11-12.4 - Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

In addition, the activity also connected to the "larger importance/significance" of the essay. As previously mentioned, *The Crucible* was written as a play to illuminate the way the government was persecuting individuals during the era of McCarthyism. Omara, also sought to have students make modern day connections to the larger social significance of the literary text. For example, the peer revision handout had prompts that assessed if students were including a societal critique to their essay.

- Does the intro paragraph include a reason why their topic is important in a way that connects to society, human beings, or the world? Yes or No
- If yes, explain what the larger importance is. If no, suggest a way that they can connect their topic to a larger importance

The questions above are examples of the way that the teacher used a literary analysis essay to further explore modern day social persecution. In addition, the second question provides an opportunity for students to have conversations on what they could include to provide a societal critique and support one another. I heard students say, "have you thought about …". Omara's teaching provides an example of how the content or in this case, a text facilitates the merging of academic and critical literacy.

It is also important to state that integrating academic content and critical topics were at times difficult and required creativity from the participants. For example, Lucia a third year Spanish teacher mentioned that she had difficulty aligning social justice themes with Foreign Language Content Standards in her non-native Spanish language courses. As a result, she made the unconventional decision to split her class into two sections that taught two unrelated units, with different content standards, at the same time. In an interview, she explained that in previous years, she worked really hard in having her non-native Spanish speaking students create social justice themed projects and integrate Spanish language but "that wasn't working out." She was dissatisfied with students' Spanish language acquisition; as a result, she decided to intentionally teach grammar and social justice topics separately. She explains below.

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I decided to let it go this year and to be a lot more traditional and formal in the way that I was teaching grammar. We do test, we do quizzes … I pretty much put it out (to students) … and they're cool with it. It becomes a different class.

In the first half of the class, I observed her teaching a unit on Spanish language structure and grammar that was taught without social justice topics. For examples, the focus of the lessons were on "demonstrative adjectives" and "using adjectives and nouns" and involved small group discussions, course textbook, and call and responsive activities. At the mid-point of class, she would seamlessly transition to the next section. On the first day of observations she transitioned by saying, "are we done (with the lesson on grammar)? Can we move on? Is that cool? … Did we finish talking about Mexico (social justice unit)?

In the second half, she taught a United States Intervention unit that had a critical analysis of colonialism, imperialism, and globalization in Latin America that connected to the foreign language standard on "analyzing cultural perspectives." Throughout the classroom observations, I witnessed students examine how U.S. intervention in Latin America impacted economic inequality, migration, and prompted resistance movement, with a specific case study on El Salvador in the 1980's. For example, during a lecture, she began teaching about El Salvador with a historical and personal context.

> Lucia – What type of indigenous people live in El Salvador?
> Students – Mayans!
> Lucia – Mayans, specifically, the Pipil Mayas. Usulután (she points to map of El Salvador) this is where my family is from. We still have a house there …

Lucia was intentional about placing herself within the lesson by locating her hometown, which also allowed her to connect her narrative to the content standard on "analyzing cultural perspectives." She would also tell students that teaching about the Salvadoran Civil War is very personal to her because of the way the war and U.S. intervention impacted her family. In addition, she mentioned that it was important to begin the case study with the historical legacy of colonialism to understand the current social, economic, and political structure of El Salvador.

Later in the lesson, she further explained El Salvador's dependency on agriculture. "Do we see a pattern? *La Dominica Republica*, *Cuba* (Spanish pronunciation), … relies on cash crops. These countries were colonized." For the remainder of the observations, Lucia taught the grammar lesson at the beginning and closed the period with the unit on U.S. intervention. The example of Lucia explains the way that at times, teachers had to find creative ways of addressing academic and critical literacy. However, the rest of the teachers taught one unit that combined content standards with social justice themes. The following section will include an in-depth example of how a teacher merged academic and critical literacy for the course of a week.

In-Depth Teaching Example: Shading and Culture Lessons

Clyde taught a course titled *Art and Literacy* to 7th and 8th grade students. At the time of the classroom observation, he was in the second unit *Shading and Culture.* He said that in the first unit, students developed some confidence as an artist and he wanted to push them in the second unit to examine, "how do we research ourselves and also our families." As a result, he decided to utilize the theme of "culture" to have students engage in research. He explains his thinking below.

> I felt like culture was the best kind of connection to that because if we think of family, culture is definitely like a foundation … why don't we dig a little deeper in that and then this year I was like, let's contextualize that with some analysis of what's negatively impacting it.

He then bridged the unit's focus on culture with the artistic development of shading so that students could develop a cultural collage. Looking at Clyde's unit plan below, it becomes clear the way he brought together social justice topics, which he termed *conceptual understanding* and also subject matter content, also known as *technical skill,* within the same unit.

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Figure 7: Shading and Culture Unit Plan

Description	
Students will first be introduced to shading with a value scale and the shaded ribbons. Through both introductory projects they will be introduced to the practice and skill of creating contrast through smooth transition of one value to the next. Students will then be introduced to the grid method that will support them in drawing more complicated realistic objects. The summative assessment will be students composing a black and white collage reflecting their culture (Heritage, religion, music, activities/interest and landscape). Students will also be thinking through what negatively influences their culture and how they can actively keep the culture flourishing and alive. In preparation for the collage students will interview family to inform their definition of culture and help with defining what has a negative impact on their culture. Students will then derive pictures from the answers of the interview questions to develop their collage. In the collage students will have to reflect their knowledge of shading, emphasis, variety, and overlap. Students will then participate in a group critique for their assessment	
Essential Questions and Big Ideas	**State Content Standards**
Conceptual Understanding	
• What is culture?	
• What negatively impacts culture?	California Visual Art Standards:
• How do we keep our cultures alive?	
Technical	1.3 Analyze the use of the elements of art and the principles of design as they relate to meaning in artwork.
• How do you use contrast and a variety of values to create the illusion of depth	
Big Ideas:	2.1 Demonstrate an increased knowledge of technical skills in using more complex two- dimensional art media and processes
Visual Symbolism/Metaphor	
Composition design (Emphasis, variation, Contrast)	

The example above displays that the unit had essential questions assigned to both the conceptual understanding and technical skills. The unit plan explains that conceptually, he wanted students to explore culture, the negative impacts, and the ways that culture is resilient. He also wanted students to develop technical artistic skill, specifically, having students "use contrast and a variety of values to create the illusion of depth," while also addressing visual art content standards. The overall goal was to have students utilize their artistic skill development of shading and their conceptual understanding of cultural stereotypes to create a cultural collage.

When I observed Clyde's classroom he was having students deconstruct cultural stereotypes. Clyde mentioned that he previously had taught technical skills, specifically "principles of art contrast, emphasis on variety." In addition students developed their conceptual understanding of culture through defining culture, read articles, and "they did [an] interview with someone at their house." The in-depth teaching example will explain how he merged academic and critical literacy by teaching about cultural stereotypes and supported students' learning through the use of artistic demonstrations and student conferences.

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Teaching about cultural stereotypes. Through the week of observations, Clyde was teaching lessons on cultural stereotypes that were used to enhance students' critical literacy and ability to develop an art cultural collage. On the second day, Clyde utilized a critical media opening activity and then, a pre-reading exercise that was followed with a text on cultural stereotypes.

The class began with a "Do-Now" activity that required students to analyze the cultural stereotypes embedded in the image of the popular cartoon "Speedy Gonzalez." After examining the image, students completed the following prompts:

1. Why do you think this image is offensive/not ok?
2. How is this image a stereotype of a certain group of people?
3. Who/what group of people is negatively impacted by this image?
4. Is anyone positively impacted?

The students described that the image had stereotypical dress and physical features of Mexicans, such as wearing a sombrero and having a brown complexion. Students also explained that the cartoon depicted Speedy Gonzales as a "sneaky" character that spoke with a heavy accent, implying that he's lacking intelligence and not to be trusted. After the warm up and discussion, Clyde led a pre-reading exercise that had students complete a handout titled *Exploring Stereotypes and Your Experience* (see *Appendix 3*) and then had students engage in a conversation. He introduced the handout by reading the first question and saying, "with what you know about stereotypes, define stereotype. What do you think stereotypes are? Just to get your mind going. In your own words, define stereotype." Students wrote down their response to the first four prompts, which also had students, explain stereotypes about their culture, why stereotypes exist, and their experience with stereotypes. Then he asked students to get out of their seats and talk to a classmate. He told students, "I want you to stand up, bring a piece of paper and pencil." After a few minutes, he said in a loud voice, "walk and find someone new, discuss questions two and four … I want you to have a discussion." After the activity, student

shared that stereotypes include negative assumptions, generalizations, and passing judgment on a group of people.

Following the pre-reading activity, students then read an article titled *Stereotypes: Do They Affect You?* (Kamal A., 2014) and also completed the prior handout. Throughout the reading, students took turns reading the text out loud. Clyde stopped the reading to clarify terms, such as segregation, ethnicity, and abolish, and to also check for understanding. The reading activity required students to make connections to the content, their lived experience, and to their project. For example, at one point, Clyde asks, students "what is one negative impact?" Students responded that stereotypes impact individuals' ability to accomplish dreams and also provided examples of stereotypes that they saw on the news. A conversation unfolded on the ways that Latinos were stereotyped on a local news station.

After the reading, students completed the handout in their table group. I walked around to hear students' comments. One student said that a stereotype is that "all Latinos are Mexican." Clyde acknowledges the students comment and says, "Latinos can be Salvadoran, Black, Puerto Rican, etc." Another student said that some stereotypes are an "insult or expectation." For example, the student said that the stereotype that "white people are rich" is an expectation and not an insult. That is different than "every Arab person is a terrorist," which is an insult. At one point during the activity, Clyde asked students to explain a stereotype associated with their culture and how they integrated it into their project. He had them respond to the handout prompts:

1. What do you have or could you add in your cultural collage that reflects a stereotype you face?
2. How do you think your cultural collage confronts that stereotype?

He mentioned after the class that he provided the prompts above because he wanted to push students to think about the application portion of their project, which he felt students were having

trouble with. At the end of the activity, Clyde asked students to share their responses. Several students mentioned that stereotypes make people question their ability and "keeps them down". Throughout the rest of the week, Clyde further integrated academic and critical literacy through artistic demonstrations and student conferences.

Artistic demonstrations and student conferences. Clyde had various teaching strategies that he used to advance academic literacy and support student learning. During the first day of my observation, Clyde held an artistic demonstration (demo). He explained that a demo was an interactive workshop to develop student's artistic development. For example, Clyde projected a student's collage on the overhead projector and said, "this is a really good collage that has variety." He then asked students, "why is this a good example of variety?" The students began positively critiquing their peer's collage, such as discussing the placement, size, and layering of images in the collage. This provided an opportunity for Clyde to remind students of the technical aspects of shading and variety. In addition, he gave students an example of proficient work and let students know what he expected in their project. Clyde then put a clear gridded transparency over the student's collage to demonstrate how to amplify an image on a collage with the use of a grid and viewfinder, known as the grid method.

During the post observation interview, Clyde mentioned that a demo is often planned ahead of time, such as the example above but sometimes occur impromptu.

> [I will] stop and reteach things whenever needs to be retaught. So, I'll stop the class and do an unplanned demonstration on technical skills: shading, drawing, drawing square by square. Based off whatever unit or skill I'm teaching.

For example, on the second day, he did an unplanned demo because he noticed that students were "struggling" and needed to be supported in their project. He demonstrated to students how to further amplify their images on their collage, using the grid method. During the demo, I heard him using language that modeled how to do the activity,

> I always do a connect the dot (when drawing) … you're going to have to practice with this …I'm just working on the outline … we're not going to get overwhelmed. Start with the most simple image you have … only outline. Any question about this? Anyone stuck … you need to have six squares done [by the time you leave class].

The classroom excerpts displays how he uses artistic demonstrations to develop students academic literacy, in this case artistic development.

In another example, Clyde used student conferences to further support student academic and critical literacy. On the third day, he held individual student conferences to assess if students were meeting the unit objectives. Conferences were held at his desk as the rest of the class was independently working on their collages. Prior to the conferences, students completed a handout titled *checking objective* (see *Appendix 4*), which he later used to check-in with students through one-on-one student conferences. During the conferences, students brought up their incomplete collages and the checking objectives handout and spoke about their progress. Clyde explained the purpose of the activity, "with the student conference, I always have them present information to me. So the one on Monday when they were presenting the information of what images they used and why they used it." He then said, that in his conversations with students they often involve the following:

> I'm like, "Where you at? How are you doing?" So quick checking with the project… "Good," "not so good," "Here's where I'm having trouble with." Then if I see that they're just glazing over, I'll push back a little bit, "I know actually where you're getting stuck. Are you still into it? Are you checking out?"

As explained in the excerpt, the student conferences was used to check-in with students and examine if they were meeting the project expectations and also assess how he could support students to meet the objectives. Similar to the quote, in my observation, I often heard Clyde telling a student, "cool, I like that" and then the conversation would move on to a question on the checking objectives sheet to further support the student. In some of the conferences, the conversation would focus on the technical part of the collage. I also noticed him having personal

conversations with students, for example, he asked a student about a cast on his arm. The in-depth teaching example was used to provide an example of social justice teaching; specifically the way a participant merged academic and critical literacy. The next section will provide the third component of social justice teaching, inquiry and action oriented projects.

Inquiry and action oriented projects.

All of the classrooms had students draw from research to advance course learning and engage in social action. The inquiry and action oriented projects were often part of a comprehensive summative assessment that used multiple types of assessments. In addition, the projects involved student choice to make learning meaningful to them, such as investigating their community, culture, or social issues. Many of the participants were influenced by the critical inquiry group's focus on Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR). As previously mentioned, YPAR is a type of critical pedagogy that demonstrates how educators work in and out of the classroom to engage themselves and students in action-oriented inquiry (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008). For example, Lucia echoed the words of many of the participants, "we've read about YPAR and that makes me excited and I think about how I can reshape some of my projects to look more like that." As a result, many of the participants had inquiry projects that not only advanced content learning but also was used as a step in engaging in social action. Below I will provide examples of inquiry and action oriented projects and end with an in-depth example of a gentrification project.

Each teacher had some form of inquiry and action oriented project that integrated into the course's unit that students utilizing for their summative assessments. For example, during class observations I saw Robert utilize several research reports with students in his lessons to explain high school push out (drop out) rates. Students read educational scholarship, examined census

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data, and education foundation reports to examine the racial and ethnic disparity in elementary and secondary schools.   When I asked him the benefit of having students examine research, he said, "we always need students to be able to practice analyzing data and data points." Research was central to the unit and the Pop Up Project, which asked students to research an Ethnic Studies topic, such as educational disparity project topic. Robert framed the Pop Up Book as:

> Part of this larger narrative about ethnic studies popping back up and or popping up in Los Angeles or my seniors writing these letters to the LAUSD school board, why they think ethnic studies should be passed. But I mean as a whole I just want to do more on developing that more critical YPAR approach.

At the time of the study, the Los Angeles Unified School Board had approved 6-1 to make Ethnic Studies a graduation requirement (Caesar, 2014). Hence, research in Robert's classroom was not only used to further course learning but to also align with the national movement to spread ethnic studies throughout Pre-K-12 classrooms.

In another example, Dan, a first year English teacher, explained that for his unit on the course text *The Perks of Being A Wallflower* he wanted students to create a hash tag (social media) advocacy campaign. He said, "I knew I wanted them (students) to do some research on a topic related to the book. And so I figured this would be a good way for them to at least get one article" that they could later use in their final assessment.   Students were asked to choose a critical issues affecting teenagers that was present in the book, such as: LGBTQ acceptance, depression, alcohol abuse, drug abuse, dating violence, teen sex, teen pregnancy, suicide, post-traumatic stress disorder, and child molestation.   The students were then asked to create an informative social media hash tag posting to educate and advocate addressing the social issue. The posting had to also include a catchy hash tag line. During an interview, Dan said that the hash tag campaign project was also influenced by his desire for students to engage in activism. He said,

With Baltimore (protest) going on, I was thinking about me and my own group of friends, how do we spread knowledge and build knowledge and ideas and a lot of it's through like social networking and social media. And so I was thinking how can I get my students to emulate that and do that because I know they use social media … So I just like wanted to introduce them to this idea of social media is … also about sharing information like this. And hash-tags can definitely create movements and build a collective knowledge around the subject.

Dan explained that the hash tag campaign was a way to involve students in social advocacy through a familiar mode of disseminating information, social media. The students used the research they gained from the hash tag project in their final assessment. The final assessments required students to write a literary analysis essay that included multiple sources on a critical teen issue to examine the ways that the issue "shapes the characterization of a character" in the course text. The examples of Robert and Dan provide a snap shot, below a more in-depth example will be described to show the development and presentation of an inquiry and action oriented project.

In-Depth Teaching Example: Gentrification Project

Mika was a first year U.S. Government teacher at the time of the study. She was teaching about gentrification, as part of a unit on federal and local government. I observed her classroom for five consecutive days, which was when students were creating, presenting, and reflecting on their gentrification project. The in-depth teaching example is focused primarily on the inquiry and action oriented portion of the unit, yet will also illuminate the ways that she engaged in other aspects of social justice teaching.

Mika's school is in a neighborhood that has been experiencing gentrification for the past decade. As a result, many of her students, use to live in the school's neighborhood boundaries but had been pushed out because of "revitalization efforts." In addition, the school also had a high rate of students being bused in from different parts of the city that were also undergoing gentrification. She said, that earlier in the year the class had a conversation about gentrification

and one of her students who was bused into the school shared, "I'm from Mid City, I live in the Valley right now because we couldn't afford rent here." In addition, Mika mentioned that she was inspired to teach the unit because of a previous CIG reading that brought together the topics of YPAR, citizenship, and gentrification. She explained below:

> Weeks before, I was thinking that I wanted to do (a unit on) gentrification and just hearing and reading about YPAR and that specific reading. [It] gave actual teacher examples … it looks freaking awesome ... But to see how a teacher's done that really got me to think how do I start taking this outside the classroom, or how do I start building student inquiry and action oriented?

She developed a gentrification unit that aligned with California History—Social Studies Standard 12.7[16] and explored the following essential question: "How does gentrification affect people and their environment?" The unit required students to engage in research and take the role of an activist. Below is a description of the gentrification project that she provided to students.

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[16] California History—Social Science Content Standards - Principles of American Democracy 12.7 – Students analyze and compare the powers and procedures of the national, state, tribal, and local governments.

Figure 8: Gentrification Project Description

"We engage in the term citizenship optimistically, in the sense of both feeling included and "at home", not defined by arbitrary geographic boundaries. Citizenship = being recognized as a decision maker and as an agent of change. To be counted. It is a critical process for engaging the public, across generations, in community governance and change." (Cammarota & Fine)

In order to learn citizenship, we must practice it. For your last project, you will choose a neighborhood in Los Angles and play the role of one activist group. You must research and provide accurate data on your neighborhood as well as present a convincing and thought provoking testimony. Because collaboration is key to this project, you must be in a team with a minimum of 3 people and maximum of 5. Below are your requirements:

- 1 page manifesto/testimony
- Research Report: Research 3 current articles on gentrification in your neighborhood. Write a 1-page summary on each article, highlighting 3 main points; 2 connections, and 1 question. Articles must be relevant, valid, only 1 blog post or opinion article allowed.
- Poster with data: Highlights the characteristics of the neighborhood and identifies areas of gentrification
    - Name of neighborhood
    - Map of neighborhood
    - Demographics: Race, Class, Income, Changes in Neighborhood
    - Resource:
        - http://maps.latimes.com/
        - La.curbed.com
- Extra Credit: protest poster or protest media for presentation

The opening quote from the project description was taken from the CIG reading (Cahill et al., 2008). She said that the she shared the quote with her students because it helped tie together the unit topics of citizenship and activism. More specifically, she said it help them, "discuss what does it mean to be a citizen and why am I making them do this project on gentrification? So I think it (reading) helped me in building my own theory in the class." The unit was broadening the government course's focus on citizenship, with being an activist. Mika said, "the main purpose is … trying to teach them activism. But literally and very much mentally, taking on the role of an activist" with the use of research. The project description above specifically stated, "you will choose a neighborhood in Los Angles and play the role of one activist group.

You must research and provide accurate data on our neighborhood as well as present a convincing and thought provoking testimony." Students were asked to include three articles, census data, and other resources to create a three-part project, consisting of a research report, gentrification poster, and testimonial. The testimonial brought together all components of the project together in a first-person narrative. Mika said she wanted students to "speak about the changes that were going on in their neighborhood as not only a resident living there but someone who wants to make other people aware of the things going on and acting as an activist in that neighborhood."

During the first three days of my classroom observations, students were putting together their gentrification posters. At the beginning of every class, Mika had a list of "Task for Today" posted, that provided daily benchmarks and resources, such as a US census link. She also invited a local community activist so that students could see someone whom was organizing in the neighborhood around similar issues. It is important to note that the project was student centered and led, meaning that students were in charge of delegating portions of the project to their peers and completed the above mentioned requirements. I often heard students telling the peers to go to the library and print out documents or to find more information on the Internet. While in the background another student would be practicing his or her testimonial.

Mika explained that she intentionally wanted students to take ownership of the project, not only in putting it together but also in the process. She explains:

> I wanted the students to research on their own, where I wasn't giving them sources or sites to start looking at. And really for them to get the information—build the information (on the posters) for what they were going to do later, which would be their testimony where they would have to talk about how gentrification is affecting them and how their neighborhood is changing.

Mika wanted the project to not only be student led, but also have students analyze data that related to their community. She mentioned that she also wanted students to analyze data because

it aligned with the Common Core Standards emphasis on interpreting informational texts, specifically census data and research-based articles.   In an interview she said,

> I wanted to see was how well were they able to gather information from the articles and interrupt the information in the articles as well as the data that they researched to create a first person narrative and a call to action to what's happening in their neighborhood.

On the fourth classroom observation, the students presented their projects. Presentations occurred through a gallery walk, students had their posters posted around the classroom and presented it to their peers. After the gallery walk, each group had a student representative read a testimonial. The gentrification project presentations closed with a brief discussion on unifying and also distinct themes found across the cities represented in the projects. One of the groups used the poster below (see *Figure 9*) to explain the way that race and ethnicity, unemployment rates, home values, etc. have changed over the years.

Figure 9: Student Gentrification Project
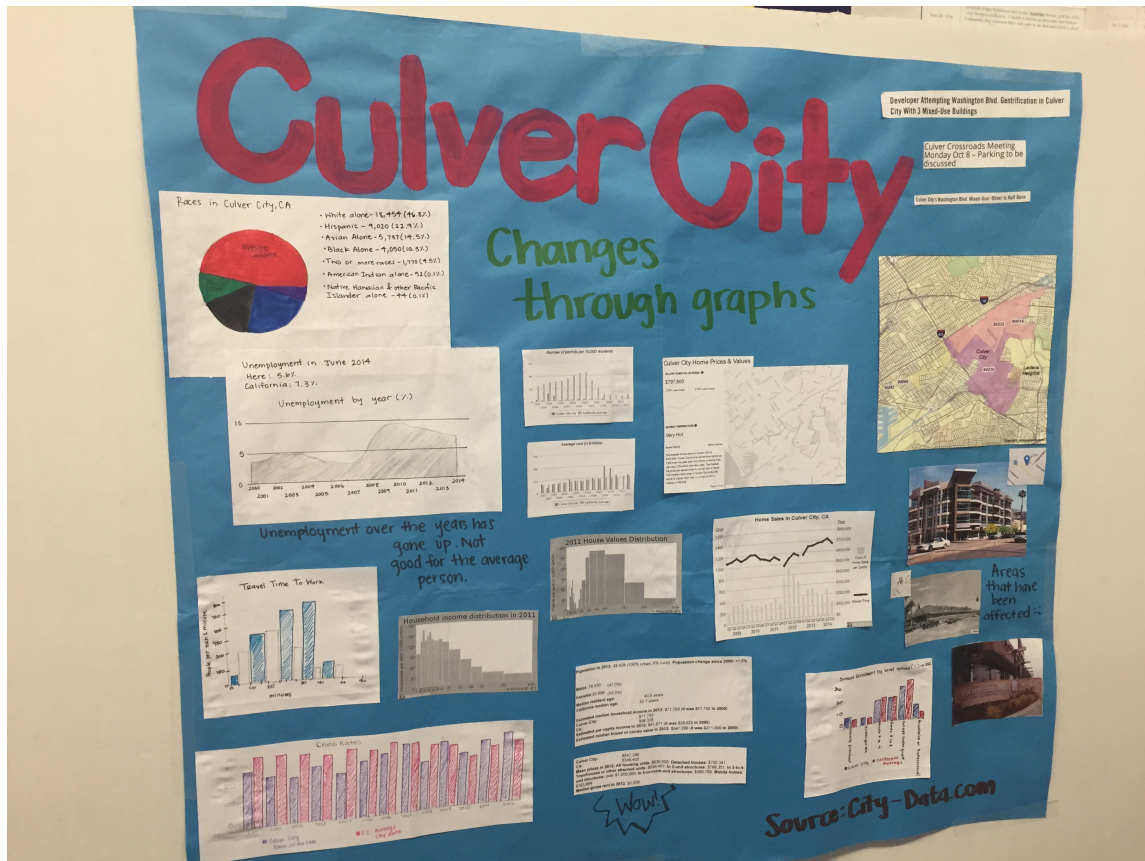
For example, students used the data in *Figure 9* (above) to explain the way the city has become more White and affluent and less affordable to purchase a home, which has pushed Latinos and low-income people out of the city. Students also provided pictures of local buildings with city maps to illustrate the way neighborhoods had changed. Similar to this project, other groups also explained how the building of a local sports stadium had been up rooting local community members.

During the testimonial portion of the presentation, students were able to build on poster presentations and include more of their personal narrative. Several of the student testimonials mentioned that they witnessed many of their Latino neighbors disappearing with landlords raising the rent and local stores and buildings being replaced with large corporations and trendy stores. Another student explained how gentrification has created a two-tiered society for her neighborhood. She said,

> "I'm thankful to live in a nice environment … (however) certain luxuries I don't get … because I live in low income housing … we don't get a parking spot. Because we live low income housing … traffic … renovations … train … tram … since everything is being renovated it's not the same … everything is pricey.

As the city has gone through changes, her neighbors and herself have lost access to parking and the ability to buy affordable local goods. One of the last presentations, said, "just because these buildings have been put up doesn't mean we have to leave … we need to rise up against!"

The following day, students reflected on their project and were also assigned the semester's final project, which was a "Call to Action." Students had to use a topic or problem from the class and address it, Mika explained to students that the Call to Action could involve "creating a public comment or contacting public figures/organizations with your specific concerns." Mika mentioned that most of her students took the final project as an opportunity to continue their activism on gentrification and engage in more direct action. For example, a student created a gentrification "meme" that she shared on social media. Another student created

a blog that included the voices of local resident's experience with gentrification and posted it on Tumbler.

In conclusion, the gentrification project displayed the way the students used data and their lived experience to address the unit's essential question: how does gentrification affect people and their environment? Moreover, students were also motivated to engage in activism beyond the classroom. The teaching examples throughout this chapter describe the way social justice teaching occurred across the participants. All of the participants had humanizing classroom culture, merged academic and critical literacy, and included inquiry and action oriented projects.

Significance: Social Justice Teaching as Process

The findings from the chapter gave examples how all of the teachers, regardless of years of teaching experience displayed the three characteristics of social justice teaching. For example, the novice teachers were often cited as providing a humanizing classroom; first year teachers provided examples of inquiry and action oriented projects that utilized social media as a form of activism; and the veteran teachers units were well planned and comprehensive. With that being said, all of the teachers had strengths in their ability to teach for social justice.

It is important to understand that social justice teaching is a process and not just a natural progression. Regardless of experience, all participants brought valuable approaches, lessons, and relationships into the classroom yet were also involved in an ongoing process to further improve their ability to teach for social justice. The CIG provided a space for like-minded educators come together and engage in a process of improving their ability to teach for social justice. Throughout out the study it was difficult to pinpoint the ways that the CIG direction impacted social justice teaching and classroom practice. However, at times it became more apparent, such

as participants use of inquiry and action oriented projects.   The participants commented throughout the findings chapters that the CIG furthered their understanding of YPAR, which led to the development of inquiry and action oriented projects. Moreover, there seem to various overlapping themes from the CIG space, such as teachers being vulnerable, developing trusting relationships, including student input in the classroom, and engaging in activism.

Chapter 7: Significance, Implications, & Future Research

This dissertation was informed by my experience as an urban high school teacher, teacher educator, and activist. These experiences led me to examine a problem that many social justice educators in urban schools confront—*it's hard to teach for social justice* in the post-NCLB era. As previously mentioned, standardized, narrowed curriculum, and the marginalization of equity based pedagogies leads to teacher demoralization, undermines instructional autonomy, forces some to teach in a state of fear, or leave the classroom. These problems with teaching for social justice in urban schools led me to examine the following question: How does participation in a critical inquiry group (CIG), sustain and enhance social justice teaching in urban secondary schools? In addition, the study had two subset questions: 1) in what ways, if any, were teachers supported and working to improve their teaching within the CIG, and 2) how were teachers engaging in social justice teaching in their classrooms?

To address the research question, I drew from three bodies of educational literature to conceptualized social justice teaching in urban schools: 1) social justice education, 2) Paulo Freire and critical pedagogy, and 3) culturally responsive pedagogy. In addition, I also included two relevant bodies of literature, research on critical inquiry groups and equity oriented teachers navigating the post-NCLB era. The study utilized a qualitative case study methodology and critical inquiry group design to examine a critical inquiry group housed within a teacher activist organization. The participants included six inquiry group members that displayed social justice teaching in urban secondary schools and participated in most CIG meetings. Their teaching experience ranged from being in their first year, having taught for a few years, and to almost a decade of teaching experience.

The first two findings chapters, Chapter 2 and 3 addressed the first research subset question that focused on the critical inquiry group space. Chapter 4 revealed that the participants

engaged in a community of transformative praxis through the CIG's deliberate political space, praxis-oriented structure, and shared leadership and facilitation. The structure and the organization of the CIG was central for teachers to feel validated and inspired to teach for social justice. In addition to the structure of the CIG, Chapter 5 described the way participants trusted one another, were able to be vulnerable among each other, and held each other accountable to their politics and pedagogy, which I termed as a model for sustaining and enhancing social justice teaching. An in-depth example describes how throughout the course of the year, a teacher was supported through the CIG to realize his goal of developing a unit of study that brought together gender and queer theory into an ethnic studies classroom.

The last major finding answered the second research subset question: how were social justice educators engaging in social justice teaching in an urban secondary classroom? The chapter suggests that social justice is a process. Regardless of teaching experience, all of the participants employed the following three characteristics of social justice teaching: 1) developing a humanizing classroom culture, 2) merging academic and critical literacy, and 3) providing inquiry and action oriented projects. The teaching examples explained how social justice teaching was a process and that all of the participants brought valuable approaches, lessons, and relationships into their classroom. The participants were also involved in an ongoing process to further improve their ability to teach for social justice. This chapter will describe the significance and implications of the findings and conclude with future research.

Significance

In December 2015, six months after data was collected, the *No Child Left Behind* Act of 2001 was removed as federal policy and replaced by the *Every Student Succeeds Act*. While NCLB is no longer in place, the new policy will not move away from the emphasis on accountability, standardization, and the privatization of public schools. The problems associated

with teaching for social justice in the post NCLB era will remain. In addition, there is no reason to believe that the preparation or development of social justice teaching will advance through traditional venues, such as teacher education programs or through school and district level professional development. Teaching for social justice will continue to be a difficult task after the removal of NCLB. However, the study provides three significant findings to support social justice educators in the current educational context.

Validating and inspiring social justice teaching. Social justice teaching can persist in the post-NCLB era through a community of transformative praxis that validated and inspired. SJEs need to have honest conversations of how they are teaching for social justice and what supports systems are needed to keep their work going in the current educational climate. These discussions cannot be venting sessions, but instead operate through a community of transformative praxis. This study provided an alterative model to develop and retain critical educators in urban school classrooms. The unique CIG space provided a social justice teacher development model that differed from participants' experience in teacher education, school site professional development, and other teacher development spaces. A significant finding in the study highlighted that the CIG validated and inspired social justice teaching.

It is important to restate that the participants had limited, if any, teacher colleagues at their school sites that were politically and pedagogically aligned. In the CIG, participants received validation from like-minded peers to overcome moments of self doubt that were impacted by the national discourse on "good teaching," school site pressure to focus on standardization, and accusations of their teaching being too political. Instead, the critical inquiry group validated and affirmed teachers that their social justice stance was not only valued but also necessary to support their students to address larger social issues. Teachers developed a

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community of like-minded colleagues within the inquiry space to counter feelings of political and pedagogical isolation at their school.

In addition to the participants feeling validated within the CIG, they were also inspired to teach for social justice. All of the participants were motivated by the praxis-oriented structure to teach for social justice. Theoretical and pedagogical discussions allowed teachers to intellectualize their practice as they were also reflecting on their own classrooms. Teachers consistently stated that they walked away with pedagogical considerations, teaching strategies, and curricular resources to implement in their classroom. The CIG's deliberate focus on combining theory and practice provided validation and inspiration for participants along the teacher continuum to engage in social justice teaching. The CIG operated as an alternative teacher development space through the inclusive and collective practice of shared leadership and facilitation to prioritize teachers' inquiry, which differed greatly from their prior teacher training. The CIG engaged participants in a community of transformative praxis that supported their desire to teach for social justice in urban schools.

Sustaining and enhancing social justice teaching. As previously mentioned, the post NCLB era has led social justice educators to endure demoralization, teach in a state of fear, or leave the classroom. The findings of the study suggest that the participants were able to sustain and enhance their teaching through their participation in the CIG. The findings highlighted that SJEs need to have authentic spaces where they can trust one another, be vulnerable, and hold each other accountable to their politics and pedagogy. The previous section mentioned that in other teacher spaces, the participants were not always aligned with their peers. However, within the CIG, members felt that they trusted their peers' politics and pedagogy. As a result, in the CIG space, teachers did not encounter political indifference or backlash. Instead, CIG members said that they were able to focus on their own social justice teaching goals, engage in critical

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conversations, and develop action plans that moved them closer to becoming the teachers they desired to become. More specifically, in observing the CIG it was apparent that teachers engaged in a reciprocal relationship of vulnerability and accountability; they spoke freely about classroom concerns, struggles, and aspirations. Their comments were met with thoughtful responses that further pushed their teaching.

The in-depth example of Robert displays that regardless of years of experience, social justice educators need support systems to sustain their teaching throughout the course of their teaching career. At the time of the study Robert was in his ninth year of teaching at a corporate charter high school. He revealed that he was experiencing his most difficult year as a teacher and struggling to sustain his practice. Robert's example reinforces that social justice teaching in the post-NCLB era is challenging. At times, teachers will have to deal with adversity and may have their teaching stagnate and may even contemplate leaving the classroom. Spaces, such as the CIG helped to re-vitalize and sustain teachers to continue the courageous task of social justice teaching.

The model for sustaining and enhancing social justice teaching describes the way that teachers, specifically Robert, not only sustained his teaching but also challenged himself to embark on new pedagogical and curricular topics to further improve his practice. While it is impossible to know how Robert's gender and queer theory unit would be taught, if at all, without the support of the CIG, he did say that he was better prepared to teach the unit. This example shows that even in adversity, teachers that participate in a collective of like-minded educators can be better positioned to teach for social justice. More specifically, the model of sustaining and enhancing social justice teaching also highlights that thoughtful planning, pedagogical discussions and input, and reflection advances social justice teaching.

Social justice teaching as a process. The findings from the study, suggest that social justice teaching is a process. Throughout the study, the participants were constantly working to improve their practice. Within the CIG, teachers worked collaboratively to deepen their understanding of theories and pedagogies to inform their teaching, while also presenting curriculum to one another and having discussions on classroom practice. In the classroom, each participant, regardless of years of teaching experience brought valuable pedagogical approaches, curriculum and lessons plans, and developed a classroom culture that led to social justice teaching. More specifically, teachers provided a humanizing classroom through relationships and structures, merged academic and critical pedagogy in the curriculum, and had students engage in inquiry and action oriented projects. The participants explained that teaching was an ongoing process, which required that they constantly reflect on their strengths and also identify areas of improvement to further engage in social justice.

The concept "social justice teaching as a process," also implies that social justice teaching is not always a linear trajectory. The use of Solórzano and Delgado Bernal's (2001) model of transformational resistance can provide a conceptual bridge to best understand social justice as a process. As Solórzano & Delgado-Bernal (2001) explain, an individual engaging in transformational resistance will not remain in that state if they do not continue to work to deepen their understanding of oppression or continue working toward social justice. Likewise, social justice educators need to continue to deepen their understanding of societal oppression and also continue to develop their practice of social justice in and out of the classroom. Otherwise, their teaching will not be sustained or improve; instead, it may stagnate, regress, or have them consider leaving the classroom. This dissertation argues that participating in a community of transformative praxis is a way for educators to sustain and enhance social justice teaching.

It is important to note, CIG participants were not immune to pressures of school accountability, standardization, and privatization that impacted social justice teaching yet the group helped them endure an attack on their practice. For example, Robert and Dan said that it was becoming too difficult to teach for social justice at their school site. As a result, they made the difficult decision to leave their school to then move over to a school that could better support their efforts in teaching for social justice. Fortunately, Robert and Dan did not leave the profession, as many critical educators have been pushed out of teaching. While it was difficult for them to sustain their teaching at the previous school sites, they found support within the CIG to continue teaching. After the study, both participants mentioned that they remained active CIG members the following academic year. The example of Robert and Dan further reinforce that a community of transformative praxis supports educators' ability to teach for social justice during the post NCLB era.

Implications for Social Justice Teaching, Development, & Scholarship

The study has implications for social justice teaching, teacher training, and scholarship. More specifically, this section will provide insight for 1) social justice teaching and classroom practice, 2) teacher education for pre-service teachers, 3) professional development for in-service teachers, and 4) scholarship on social justice teaching.

Social justice educators and teaching. The dissertation deliberately provided practical examples of social justice teaching throughout the teaching experience continuum. Examples of classroom culture were provided to show how teachers developed humanizing classrooms. Further, in-depth examples displayed how teachers engaged in academic and critical literacy and inquiry and action oriented projects. The teachers highlighted in the study, explained how they navigated the hurdles of NCLB, operated in various school contexts, and engaged practices to teach for social justice.

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Moreover, a key finding of the study was that social justice teaching was a process. Teachers regardless of years in the classroom engaged in social justice teaching and were constantly in a process of improving their practice. While this may be obvious to teacher practitioners, it is important to emphasize that social justice teaching requires pedagogical, theoretical, and social support. More specifically, for PreK-12 teachers it is important to consider, in what ways, are they intentionally working, individually and collectively to further sustain and enhance social justice teaching. I argue that teaching and classroom practices can be further advanced through a collective of politically and pedagogically aligned colleagues that engage in a community of transformative praxis.

As previously stated, within the current education context, it is not only difficult to teach for social justice but there are also limited supports within teacher training to develop the practice of social justice teaching. According to each of the participants in this study, the critical inquiry group provided an alternative PD model for critical educators in different school context. Instead of waiting for teacher preparation or in-service teacher professional development to become more socially just, teachers should seek to create their own spaces that best suit their local teaching context. The teachers in the study voluntarily met once a month and took turns facilitating meetings to further support their personal and collective practice. The teachers were supported through the parent activist organization All Power the People (APP), which helped facilitate the process of creating an inquiry group. However, a critical inquiry is not dependent on a larger organizational body. For example, as a result of Lucia and Omara's involvement in the CIG, they developed a critical inquiry group at their school site to address their students' concerns regarding the lack of a culturally relevant curriculum. The example further displays the way a teacher-led critical inquiry group can be developed at a school site.

Teacher education for pre-service teachers. Social justice is becoming a popular theme within schools of education and teacher education, yet social justice must move from being just buzz words in the missions and vision statements of these schools and onto the practice of teacher preparation institutions. The two first year teachers, Mika and Dan said that they enrolled in the teacher education program because of its social justice focus. Yet felt disillusioned because they were not engaging in socially just- political or pedagogical conversations. As a result they joined the critical inquiry group. Their experience is a call to teacher educators and teacher education programs to think in what ways, if any, are they preparing pre-service teachers to teach for social justice. More specifically, in what ways can teacher education administrators, educators, alumni, and current students collaborate to ensure that teacher preparation is best equipping pre-service teachers to teach for social justice? This study has two suggestions for teacher education programs: 1) (re-) consider the collaboration of pre- and in-service teachers and 2) (re-) work the use of teacher inquiry projects to engage in social justice teaching.

Teacher collaboration and inquiry were a major theme across the study and provided important implications for teacher education. These themes are often involved in teacher education programs. For example most teacher education programs often require students to collaborate with an in-serve teacher, who often serves as their guiding teacher. New teachers mentioned that they benefited from witnessing the possibilities of social justice teaching from more experienced CIG members. It is important for teacher education programs to consider the opportunities available for pre-service teachers to witness social justice teaching. In what ways, if any, are guiding teachers modeling social justice teaching? How can teacher education rethink the relationship between pre-service teachers and their guiding teachers to sustain and enhance social justice teaching?

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Another implication for teacher preparation is the use of teacher inquiry. Various teacher education programs require students to embark on a teacher inquiry project, specifically to investigate an aspect of their teaching. As suggested from the findings, the participants engaged in inquiry to improve practice and also had their students engage in inquiry to conduct action-oriented projects. It is important to examine the use of inquiry in developing teachers within teacher education programs. In other words, how can inquiry be utilized as a tool to further prepare teachers to teach for social justice in urban schools? What role, if any, can a critical inquiry group play with pre-service and in-service teachers?

Professional development for in-service teachers. Similar to the critique of teacher education programs, teachers also mentioned that their school professional development (PD) did not support them to improve their social justice teaching practice. As a result, teachers chose to participate in the critical inquiry group as an alternative professional development. There is a need to reconfigure professional development to prepare educators to teach for social justice. In addition to incorporating a social justice focus, there is also a need to shift the hierarchy of PD, from being top down to a bottom up model that centers the voice and needs of teachers. This study provided two examples of teacher led social justice professional development, the CIG and Lucia and Omara's teacher led space at their campus, for schools to consider.

A critical inquiry group structure provides an opportunity for educators within a school to collaborate towards improving their ability to teach for social justice. More specifically, a critical inquiry group has implications for school site professional development. The CIG provided an alternative PD model that was teacher led, facilitated, and centered. Various examples described the way that participants benefited from teacher collaboration across the teaching experience continuum and subject matter disciplines. As previously mentioned, Lucia and Omara adopted a critical inquiry group model at their campus, which later turned into a

series of teacher-led professional development for their staff. With the support of school administration, critical inquiry groups can operate at the school level to address campus specific issues, such as a campus lacking culturally relevant teaching.

The example of Lucia and Omara has implications for educators considering a professional development model that focuses on social justice practice. Creating a social justice professional development model requires for school administrators to trust their teachers and provide them time and space to develop alongside their colleagues. For teachers, this requires them to be willing to lead, facilitate, and participate in a collective inquiry group to teach for social justice. The first obstacle for school site is to debunk the notion that teaching is politically neutral and recognize that social justice teaching not only benefits their students but also enrich their practice. This is by no means an easy task, however, Lucia and Omara provide an intriguing example of a CIG developing professional development workshops that shifted teacher training at their school site towards a social justice professional development model.

Scholarship on social justice teaching. The study adds to the current literature on social justice education by describing innovative social justice teaching approaches in urban schools. Empirical examples were provided to support critical educators and their practice through a critical inquiry group. Most importantly, the study seeks to expand the literature to move beyond identifying social justice teaching to instead, examine sustaining and enhancing social justice teaching. A model is provided in this study for sustaining and enhancing social justice teaching through a critical inquiry group. However, more scholarship is needed to document strategies that teachers are utilizing to support and improve their ability to teach for social justice.   In agreement with a recent study, I recommend for scholars to examine alternative teacher development spaces, such as teacher activist organizations, organizations for teachers of color, and other teacher led spaces (Kohli, Picower, Martinez & Ortiz, 2015).

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Lastly there are also methodological implications that can be drawn from the use of a Freirean research approach, specifically the design of a critical inquiry group. The study provided the advantage of working alongside teachers and supporting their work. I often served as a university ally and connected them to resources at the local university, such as scholarly journals. In addition, I also connected CIG members to people, such as professors and staff to further their own education. At other times, I served as a person to bounce off ideas, reflect on their practice, provide pedagogical advice, and offer teaching resources. Research should be mutually beneficial for the participants and researcher. For researchers, it important to consider, in what ways is their research improving their material conditions of the participants and local community. In the context of working with teachers, how can research support and improve their teaching practice and their students? In what ways, are we as researchers, working to meet the material needs of our participants? These questions are important to consider when working with social justice educators and schools.

Limitations & Future Research

This study focused on a critical inquiry group's impact on social justice teaching. Before, exploring new research, I will first describe the limitations of the study, specifically the lack of generalizability and missed opportunities during data collection. Building from the limitation, new research will continue to examine social justice teaching yet move towards investigating student learning outcomes. The section below will further explain.

Limitations. Due to the use of a purposeful sample selection process, the sample size was intentionally small and distinct. As a result, generalizability cannot be made to social justice educators across the nation. Moreover, social justice is a term that has various interpretations; some may not use the study's definition of social justice teaching in urban schools as including

culturally caring classrooms, academic and critical literacy, and extending learning outside of the classroom or activism. As mentioned in the literature review, this study combined literatures on social justice education, Paulo Freire and critical pedagogy, and culturally responsive pedagogy to conceptualize social justice teaching in urban schools. This was done because there is not a set definition on social justice teaching. Many educators may limit or expand the definition of social justice teaching. In addition, there are growing pedagogical approaches that deserve attention, such as decolonizing pedagogy, queer pedagogy, and community responsive pedagogy that can further inform social justice teaching.

In addition to generalizability, there were missed data collection opportunities that were a result of the research design and data collection schedule. For example, I was not able to witness any of the teaching units that were highlighted in the CIG curriculum presentations during classroom observations, which could have enhanced the study. Due to the unpredictable nature of who would volunteer for a curriculum presentation and when these units would be taught, there was a missed opportunity to further examine the impact of the CIG on social justice teaching. Classroom observations were scheduled in advance and as a result did not always align with the units that were presented in the CIG. It could have been valuable to explore in what ways if any, teachers incorporated their peers' feedback through classroom observations and post observation interviews. Another missed data collection opportunity was due to the classroom observation design, specifically, the limited time spent in each teacher's classroom. Classroom observations were limited to one or two weeks, which did not allow me to capture a full unit of study. Throughout the interviews, I had to piece together how the lessons I observed connected to the rest of the unit. As a result, I was not able to examine the intricacies of social justice teaching that occur over an extended period of time. Both generalizability and missed data collection opportunities were limitations in the study.

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Future research. After completing the yearlong study, I was left wondering in what ways does social justice teaching benefit marginalized PreK-12 students? Teachers in this study would sporadically mention anecdotal evidence of how their former or current students benefited from social justice teaching. While this study was not designed to answer the above-mentioned question, it allowed me to begin exploring the possibility of a study examining the impact of social justice teaching and learning. This type of research is needed due to the lack of studies that describe the ways that social justice teaching provides concrete learning and social outcomes. In the future, I seek to examine the outcomes of social justice teaching that not only include what teachers say but also includes the perspective of low-income students of color. More specifically, I am interested in examining how does social justice teaching engages in learning subject matter content, critical thinking, and civic engagement?

Similar to this study, I believe that a future study on social justice teaching learning outcomes should be designed to support and sustain social justice teaching such as a critical inquiry group design. Another key component is the inclusion of student voice. Student voice can cross check, and triangulate what teachers say about their teaching and classroom observations. Student voice can enhance the findings by illuminating factors that may not be observed in the classroom or said by teachers. In this dissertation, there were not any student interviews or quotes taken verbatim from classroom observations. As a result, I was not able to capture the ways social justice teaching impacted students or what they learned from this type of teaching.   Including student voice would also capture the rich interactions in the classroom and allow them to explain why social justice teaching matters or does not matter for marginalized youth.

In conclusion, this dissertation was my attempt as a former classroom teacher, teacher educator, and activist to examine how social justice teaching was sustained and enhanced

through a critical inquiry group. The teachers in the study did not romanticize or glamorized their work in urban schools, but instead described that social justice teaching in urban school as a continuous and at times laborious process. A process that is further supported through a community of transformative praxis that validates and inspires social justice teaching. The committed and courageous participants in the study demonstrated that trusting one another, being vulnerable, and holding each other accountable sustained and enhanced their teaching and practice. This dissertation is best closed with a quote by Sonia Nieto that I recently found on a CIG recruitment flyer: "Excellent teachers do not emerge full blown at graduation; nor are they just 'born teachers.' Instead they are always in the process of 'becoming (Nieto, 2003).'" Throughout the study it became evident that each of the participants were in a "process of becoming!"

Appendix

Appendix 1 – Proposal to Conduct Research on the Critical Inquiry Group

Goal and Purpose of Research

The current post NCLB era—i.e., standardization, accountability, and privatization—limits

teachers' ability to teach for social justice. I want to see how participation in a CIG impacts

participants teaching. With the permission of APP's leadership council and the members of the

CIG, I would like to support by being a research ally and connect the CIG to the university

resources and support the CIG and its members throughout the research process.

Research Plan

Audio record CIG meetings, analyze CIG documents, and follow up with teachers to interview

and observe their teaching.

Recommendations

If approved, is there anything the collective would like for me to include or consider to further

support the organization or the CIG? Any Recommendations**.**

Phases of Research

Phase 1:	• During the first meeting, describe the research proposal to the participants of the critical inquiry group (CIG). Ask for approval and input.
	• Observe CIG's to identify teachers to interview and observe their teaching.
	• Audio record CIG's and collect shared documents.
Phase 2:	• **Ask 4-6 teachers to interview and observe their teaching.**
	• **Begin teacher interviews**
	• **Audio record CIG's and collect shared documents.**
Phase 3:	• **Classroom observations**
	• **Interview teachers**
	• **Audio record CIG's and collect shared documents.**
Phase 4:	• **Closing interviews**
	• **Audio record CIG's and collect shared documents.**

Appendix 2 – Interview Questions

Interview 1 – Becoming a social justice educator, social justice teaching, and context

This study is focused on how the teacher inquiry group impacts your ability to teach for social justice. I'm going to ask you questions about what led you to teach, your school context, and to describe of your teaching.

- **Throughout the interview, I'll be using social justice teaching as an umbrella term for various types of social justice oriented pedagogies and approaches, such as critical pedagogy, culturally responsive pedagogy, and decolonizing pedagogy. Don't feel constricted by the term social justice teaching, feel free to refer to decolonizing pedagogy or any other framework.**
- **Also, while I may know a little about your teaching, school context, and work with APP, be as descriptive as possible. I rather have your voice tell your story, than having myself draw connections.**
  - **I will probably ask you to expand your answers throughout the interview.**
- **Interview procedure**
  - **As I'm interviewing, you can always ask me to:**
    - **Slow down, rephrase a question, skip questions or end the interview**
1. **What led you to teach? What led you to teach with a social justice purpose?**
   a. **What are some experiences that led you to teach for social justice?**
   b. **How did you end up teaching at an urban school? Was this a deliberate choice or not?**
2. **Explain your school context?**
   a. **Would you consider your school receptive, indifferent, or hostile to your teaching?**
   b. **What opportunities do you have at your school to teach for social justice?**
   c. **What obstacles do you face at your school to teach for social justice?**
3. **Can you explain how you structure your classroom? Why?**
   a. **What are your classroom procedures, norms, and/or rules? Why?**
   b. **Can you explain your classroom seating arrangement and furniture? Why?**
4. **Can you give me a recent example of a lesson or unit that engaged in social justice teaching?**
   a. **Why is this an example of social justice teaching?**
   b. **How did this unit or lesson connect to content standards or goals?**
5. **What led you to participate in the critical inquiry group?**
   a. **How long have you participated in the group?**
   b. **How involved are you in the CIG?**

Interview 2 – Planning, implementation, and tools for social justice teaching

1. **Would you consider the teaching I observed as a representation of a typical sequence of lessons or did you significantly change your teaching for my observations?**
2. **Can you tell me the planning that went into creating the lessons I observed?**
   a. **Why did you choose to teach these lessons?**
   b. **What resources did you draw from to develop these lessons?**
3. **In what ways, if any, were these lessons an example of social justice teaching?**
   a. **In what ways, did these lessons engage students in academic literacy or content learning?**
   b. **In what ways, did these lessons engage students in critical literacy?**
   c. **What strategies or skills did you use to teach this lesson?**
4. **What ways, if any did the CIG support you in teaching these lessons or in previous lessons?**

Interview 3 - Impact of a Critical Inquiry Group

1. **Can you tell me about your experience in the critical inquiry group this year?**
2. **In what ways, if any, has your participation in the CIG support your growth and teaching?**
   a. **How have the readings and theories and concepts from the CIG readings impacted your growth and teaching? How did the discussions further your growth and teaching?**
   b. **How has your participation in the curriculum presentations supported or enhance your growth or teaching?**

      i.   **Can you take me back to the day that you presented your curriculum to the CIG, how did you feel as you were presenting to the CIG (This question is only for CIG members that presented their curriculum to the CIG)?**

           1.   **In what ways if any, was presenting your curriculum helpful?**

           2.   **Did you gain any insightful feedback?**

3.   **What lessons, strategies, or resources have you gained as a member of the CIG?**

    b.   **What strategies or skill have you gained in the CIG?**

    c.   **How has your participation in the CIG made you a better teacher?**

4.   **In what ways, would you want to the CIG to change or improve to support you and other teachers?**

Appendix 3 – Exploring Stereotypes and Your Experience

Doc #_____   Name_____

Exploring Stereotypes and Your Experience

PART 4

FORMATIVE

1. Define Stereotypes: _____
_____
_____

2. Provide an example of a stereotype of the culture you belong to: _____
_____
_____

4. Why do you think stereotypes exist: _____
_____
_____
_____

READING ANALYIS

Article 1: Stereotypes: Do They Affect You?

Part 1: Have you ever been the victim of a stereotype? Yes/no

1. (If yes, explain what your experience was) (If no, explain an experience of someone you know)
_____
_____
_____
_____

Part 2: Summarizing author's argument:

. What do you think the author is trying to say with this article? _____
_____
_____
_____

2. What 3 ways do you think stereotypes negatively impact culture?

A._____
_____

B._____
_____

C._____
_____

3. Do you agree with the author's argument? Why or why not? _____
_____
_____
_____

4. How has this article changed your definition of what a stereotype is? _____
_____

APPLICATION

Bringing it back to your cultural collage

1. What do you have or could you add in your cultural collage that reflects a stereotype you face?
_____
_____

2. How do you think your cultural collage confronts that stereotype? _____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Doc #_____

FORMATIVE

Name_____

Define Racist:_____
_____

Define Ethnicity:_____
_____

Define Culture: _____
_____

A. What are 5 negative impacts of stereotypes?
1)_____
2)_____
3)_____
4)_____
5)_____

B. Who do you think benefits from stereotypes? (Who is not usually the victim of them?)
Who/what_____ How do they benefit? _____
_____

Who/what_____ How do they benefit? _____
_____

READING ANALYIS
Article 2: We're a culture, not a costume' this Halloween
A. What is the meaning of the title "We're a culture, not a costume' this Halloween?
(be sure to give evidence from the text!)
_____
_____
_____
_____

B. (Counter Argument) What reason do people think it is ok to dress in a costume that reflects a
stereotype? _____
_____

C. In reading the article, what did you notice about who is usually the target or victim of stereotypes? ___
_____
_____

D. Respond to the quote on the board: _____
_____
_____
_____
_____

APPLICATION
Bringing it back to your cultural collage
A. What are 2 ways your cultural collage confronts stereotypes of you, or your community or your culture?
1 . _____
_____
2._____

How can you visually make it clear that you are against/concerned with what negatively impacts your
culture?
1 . _____
_____

Appendix 4 – Cultural Collage – Checking Objectives

Doc #_____   **Cultural Collage**   Name_____
                          Checking Objective

Please describe what image you are using to reflect each question and what it means

1. What image are you using for question *1. Is culture important to you? Why or why not?*
*Image:*_____
*What it means?*_____
_____
_____

2. What image are you using for question 2. *How would you define you and your family's culture?*
*Image:*_____
*What it means?*_____
_____
_____

3. What image are you using for question 3. *What specifically negatively impacts or affects your families culture?*
*Image:*_____
*What it means?*_____
_____
_____

4. What image are you using for question 4 *How do these things negatively impact your family's culture?*
*Image:*_____
*What it means?*_____
_____
_____

5. What image are you using for question 5. *What is one experience that you have gone through or our family has gone through that shows or represents our culture (This could be a trip, a celebration or an experience)*
*Image:*_____
*What it means?*_____
_____
_____

6. What image are you using for question 6. _____
_____
*Image:*_____
*What it means?*_____
_____
_____

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