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A Process, Not a Position: A Qualitative Study of How Teachers Lead for Educational Social Justice

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A Process, Not a Position:
A Qualitative Study of How Teachers Lead for Educational Social Justice

By

SIOBHAN REILLEY
DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of

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of the

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DAVIS

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2022

i

Dedication

In the fuzzy montage of moments that are my memories of the overwhelming process of preparing for college applications, one stands out crystal clear. Sitting in the Ponderosa High School cafeteria, getting ready to take some standardized exam that I was sure held the key to my future in its yet-to-be-bubbled answer sheet, there was a question about our parents' highest level of education. I looked over the spectrum of options. My #2 Ticonderoga hovered over "Some College" but I was distracted by another response, inaccurate but aspirational. I made a pledge to myself that my kids, if they were to exist, would fill in the last choice on that list: the one that read, "Postgraduate, Advanced Degree or Doctorate."

Simon and Martin, this is for you. Mommy did it.

Abstract

This qualitative study explores the ways teacher leaders define educational social justice for themselves and what that means in their teaching. The purpose is to contribute to the body of literature on teachers' own perspectives and experiences of how they attempt to teach and lead for social justice within their context and roles. By using written surveys and semistructured interviews, teacher leaders shared their own definitions of teacher leadership and educational social justice. The three themes that emerged about teacher leadership from the survey are leadership as service, leadership by example, and leadership as a process, not a position. Identifying as a social justice advocate was a continuum rather than a binary, with most teachers aspiring towards it and feeling like more work was necessary to embrace the title. Within follow-up interviews, three other themes about educational social justice emerged. One, teachers made conscious curricular choices to reflect social justice objectives. Two, as teachers they had to navigate and negotiate competing political climates, both locally and nationally. And finally, these teachers felt a personal toll and felt a personal impact of social justice-motivated teaching. These participants found that formal collaboration, school policies, and critical national events provided both support and challenges to working towards social justice objectives.

Keywords: social justice teaching; social studies education; teacher leadership; secondary teachers.

Contents

List of Tables

Chapter 1: Introduction

Background and Purpose Statement

By virtue of the authority vested in me as Governor, I hereby issue this Executive Order to ensure excellence in K-12 public education in the Commonwealth by taking the first step on Day One to end the use of inherently divisive concepts, including Critical Race Theory, and to raise academic standards.

—Executive Order 1, Commonwealth of Virginia, January 15, 2022

Obviously, like I'm not teaching critical race theory…but we are looking at racial systems.

—California high school teacher

If a teacher is doing their job correctly, you should never know about their politics, details of their personal life or cultural stances. #justteach

John Rich, country music star, Twitter, April 22, 2022

… it has become a political move for a teacher to say all of these things are made up.

California middle school teacher

Teachers are on the front lines of the Jan. 6 culture war

NPR headline, January 4, 2022

Depending on the media ecosystem, public school teachers may be portrayed as selfless, unbiased, committed public servants or entitled, radical, and ineffective drains on public coffers. They should be teaching "the truth," but is the truth American exceptionalism or American oppression? On all sides, headlines confirm that classrooms are increasingly the battleground for the ongoing political culture war. But whether teachers are generals for the enemy, passive soldiers just following orders, or beleaguered victims caught in the middle is far from clear in this fog of war. It is within this context that teachers who are committed to social justice and consider themselves leaders try to make sense of what this all means and find their role.

For teachers who aspire to be leaders for social justice in education, their context and relationships dictate in what capacities teacher leadership exists (Neumerski, 2013). Some may feel limited to their own teaching and look to make changes through their own curriculum and instruction, perhaps through collaboration with peers (Leander & Osborne, 2008). Others may look to their community for opportunities to lead, meaning their work towards social justice happens outside the school. Because teachers operate in so many different settings, the conditions and context within those environments have an impact on how they attempt to lead. Their settings will also dictate how their attempts to lead are received. It is known that teachers are working for educational social justice, yet there is little research on how teachers define teacher leadership for social justice for themselves or how they experience teaching for social justice in these contentious political conditions.

This study explores the topic of how teachers lead for social justice in education and what they identify as supporting or challenging that work. Many teachers enter the profession wanting to make a difference (Siera & Siera, 2011; Sinclair, 2008), and for some, that is tied to values of equality, diversity, and inclusion. However, the traditional hierarchy of leadership in public high schools limits the opportunities teachers have to be leaders in a formal capacity. They might find that they have the most agency within the confines of their own classroom. Changing one's own teaching is a very direct means of making change. But it is also limited to the confines of that one classroom. This can be a source of frustration for some teachers committed to educational social justice. However, some teachers may find their classrooms to be contested spaces where they do not feel that they have the agency to make changes or fear the reaction from students and families. Teachers are also operating within a larger community, and the beliefs and political attitudes within that community also impact how teachers are able to approach or present issues

of race, class, and identity. These questions are at the forefront of political conflict right now and, as President Biden recently said, make teachers the "target of culture wars" (Vazquez, 2022).

Educational social justice has wide-ranging definitions in the literature, and that allows for many different entries into examining what it might look like in practice (Hackman, 2005). Most definitions include the need to address inequalities in opportunity, access, and representation among marginalized populations. It may also include attempts to dismantle practices and structures that have systematized and perpetuated these inequalities. The varied and broad definitions of educational social justice suggests that teachers themselves may also have a variety of definitions of social justice that shape the way they perceive and enact their roles.

Teacher instructional leadership is equally hard to define for researchers, and it is even harder to isolate from the other factors associated with school leadership (Mangin & Stoelinga, 2009; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). The very integrated nature of school leadership means that contributions of teacher leaders are tricky to extract from the role of principals or outside instructional coaches. Compounding that is how much teacher leadership depends on contextual factors such as support from principals, logistics of collaboration, and norms or culture of any given campus (Smylie & Denny, 1990). There is also limited research into how teachers themselves view their experiences as leaders. Investigating how teachers view themselves as leaders is an important source of insight into how teachers also see their role as it relates to working towards social justice objectives. Additionally, although research on teacher leadership was abundant in the 1990s and associated with school reform, there is a dearth of recent studies. In contrast, educational social justice and teaching for social justice are topics of intense

research. This work is intended to help bridge the gap by examining the intersection and interplay of these two critical topics.

The goal of this qualitative study is to explore the ways teacher leaders define educational social justice for themselves and their students. The purpose is to contribute to the body of literature on teachers' own perceptions and experiences of how they attempt to teach and lead for social justice within their context and roles. Although all teachers operate within a shared structure of public schools, each has their own personal background and each campus is unique and situated in a community that has its own cultures as well. By capturing the beliefs and experiences of secondary social studies teachers across different teaching settings, this study adds rich detail about how these teachers view their own work for educational social justice and what they identify as the forces that support their work and the barriers that make the work challenging. The focus is on three research questions:

Research Questions

The research questions guiding this study include the following:

1. How do teacher leaders define leading for educational social justice in their own role?

2. What factors do teacher leaders identify that support their efforts for social justice teaching?

3. What barriers do teacher leaders identify as impacting their social justice goals?

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

For research to be useful, it must build upon the work that has come before (Boote & Beile, 2005), and in this chapter, I review and discuss several areas of research that relate to teacher leadership and educational social justice in order to situate my study in the nexus of existing literature. First, I present the theoretical framework that helped guide the direction of my research and provided a lens through which to analyze the findings. I follow with a review of educational social justice literature, particularly as it relates to defining the term and what it means to teach for social justice. I then review one of the essential theories of social justice teaching: culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP). The last two sections discuss teacher leadership and the related idea of teacher agency.

Theoretical Framework

To paraphrase James Baldwin (1963/2008), teachers do not operate only in a classroom, but within a society as well. As such, forces and experiences outside the classroom impact how teachers are able to do their jobs as well as how they view themselves and their role. I used a socioecological framework of social justice leadership in education (Berkovich, 2014), which is based on Bronfenbrenner's (1976) ecological systems theory, as the theoretical framework. Bronfenbrenner's original theory posits that individuals change and develop as a result of the interrelations between humans and their immediate settings as well as between humans and the broader social structures of their environment. He suggests that how people learn in educational settings is a function of sets of forces. This theoretical framework provides a lens through which the many factors that impact teachers' approaches to social justice may be sorted. Bronfenbrenner explains environment to be made up of four nested structures:

- Microsystems: The immediate setting in which the learner is located. This includes place, time, the role of the setting, and the activities that take place there.

- Mesosystem: The interaction of the various microsystems or major settings in which one participates.

- Exosystem: This extends the mesosystems to include the concrete social structures that influence those systems. This includes both formal and informal structures that shape what takes place in various mesosystem settings.

- Macrosystems: The overarching institutions and organizational ideologies of the society, which also serve as carriers of information.

- Chronosystem: The four nested structures above are also situated in a specific historical context, as well as being subject to change over time.

These four systems are all occurring within a specific place in time in the course of the participants' careers. Defining each of the systems within the teachers' experiences allows for the ways in which social justice work is both supported and challenged. For the purposes of this study, the teacher participants are situated in specific classrooms and campuses as their microsystems. Teachers within their classrooms have varying levels of control over what they do on a daily basis. This includes decisions about content, curriculum, instructional practices, and the ways in which they interact with students. The teachers in this study have a fairly high level of control, due in part to social studies content not being part of state standardized teaching. The teacher participants' microsystems also include their family or home lives as well as their professional peer group. They may also be members of political organizations, which would create another microsystem. These microsystems are the immediate settings that the teachers inhabit, as teachers.

The mesosystems are the interplay among their personal backgrounds and experiences, their teaching setting, and their nonprofessional settings. The cross-relationships among their microsystems create the mesosystem (Leonard, 2011). The participants in this study might have interactions between their peer group of fellow teachers, including the History Project, and their classroom community of students. They also have an interplay between their family or home life and their political affiliations. Those political affiliations will also interact with their classroom activities or role. The mesosystem may be where teachers identify their own leadership most clearly, as it is a space of lateral interactions and interplay among the many small settings in which they are situated.

District policies and state education laws are part of the exosystem. The teacher participants are acting within settings that are shaped by forces outside and beyond their control in which they do not directly participate. For the purpose of this study, this might also include the community or neighborhood in which they teach. The Sacramento region is diverse, and different geographic locations have varied expectations and norms. There are also important distinctions among school districts, their governance, and the policies that shape teaching. Although state education laws might be the same throughout California, districts implement them very differently. The operation and politics within a given school district are important factors in the exosystem of educators.

The micro-, meso-, and exosystems are all situated in a macrosystem consisting of the prevailing cultural, economic, and political conditions of the society (Leonard, 2011). The macrosystem includes national political and economic institutions, such as a partisan conflict or economic growth or recession. Teachers and teaching happen within a multicultural, capitalist society, and public high schools reflect and are impacted by these forces. The media and popular

culture are also part of the macrosystem in which teachers operate. How information is conveyed and how schools and teachers are presented and perceived by the public matters here as well.

Finally, the chronosystem considers the critical importance of time as a factor in all other systems and interactions. Time refers to not only the span of an individual's life but also the historical period in which the systems and interactions are occurring. The chronosystem includes how teacher participants and their teaching situations have changed over time. This may relate to how long they have been teaching in a given school or how the school has changed in the time they have been there. For some, there may be a growing sense of urgency when it comes to social justice and leading for change that is directly connected to the increased awareness and visibility of systemic racial injustice. The uprisings against police brutality during the summer of 2020, widespread demands for an honest reckoning with the history of racism in America, and the subsequent White backlash are all essential elements to understanding why teachers are leading for change at this current moment. Although the violent oppression of and brutality against people of color has a long history, this particular series of recent events provides an urgency. Seeing teacher leaders as not only actors in, but also products of, multiple interrelating systems allows a deeper examination into the ways they choose to engage in social justice leadership.

A socioecological viewpoint on social justice efforts in education broadens the focus on leadership actions in schools (Berkovich, 2014). Using the socioecological lens illuminates the ways in which social justice leaders seek to make change within schools but also within a much larger social context. It presents a macroperspective on social justice leadership in education that links these leadership efforts with the concepts of activism and social change (Berkovich, 2014, p. 297). It brings to light the reciprocity between home and school settings (Bronfenbrenner,

1976). For teachers personally, this means that there may be a fluidity or new awareness of how their own home life influences their working life. For students, this two-way relation reflects one of the key tenets of CRP, in which students' cultural identities are valued, affirmed, and ultimately reflected by the school setting. In this sense, the teacher leaders in the study may be using this type of pedagogy both as an instructional philosophy and as a leadership strategy. The participants' actions are seen more clearly as the results of many factors, not just personal characteristics or convictions.

Educational Social Justice

Although many conversations about schools and teaching use the term *social justice*, there are multiple definitions of this term (Berkovich, 2014; Cho, 2017; Cochran-Smith, 1999, 2004, 2009; Greene, 2008; Keddie, 2012; Larrabee & Morehead, 2010; Theoharis, 2007; Webb et al., 2004). Some researchers' usage may be very specific and precise, yet in the public discourse, and on many campuses, the meaning is expansive and abstract. The most broad and colloquial use of social justice in education means almost anything that relates to questions of race, culture, power, equity, and diversity, as well as issues of high academic standards, content mastery, and accountability (Cochran-Smith, 2004). This is also how many parents, students, and public observers of schools would likely explain it as well. Pushed to elaborate further, many people both in and out of education would say that social justice has to do with righting the wrongs of the past that have left non-White and lower income students behind in terms of academic achievement (North, 2009). How schools and society right those wrongs might be an area of great policy debate, but the general idea is that schools must strive to ensure that all students have access to opportunities and resources irrespective of the discrimination and

exclusion of the past. Some might also state that this includes an effort to make schools themselves more inclusive of those students who have experienced marginalization in the past.

Educational social justice must encompass and integrate multiple ideas. Reflecting a duality of goals rather than a competition, such as in the model introduced by Nancy Fraser (1998), provides a more complex definition for what social justice means and suggests specific changes needed to enact to meet that definition in education. She argues that social justice cannot be a question of either redistribution of goods and services or representation and inclusion; it must be an effort that addresses both. Social justice in education must mean the more equitable and democratic distribution of material goods (resources, opportunity) and power but also greater recognition and representation of those who are not part of the dominant culture of schools (Fraser, 1998).

Social justice in education is, in part, about representing the experiences and perspectives of people and groups who have not been included. In this sense, it is about recognition. This includes the belief that the lived experiences and cultural knowledge students possess have value and should help craft the curriculum. Curriculum that decenters Whiteness and challenges neutrality is one part of educational social justice (Berkovich, 2014). It requires teachers willing to counter the traditional approach of curriculum that values and upholds White, middle class, English-only norms, to the detriment of all others. Within Fraser's (1998) framework, social justice teaching is positioned as aiming to provide ways to pay what Gloria Ladson-Billings (2006) has called the "educational debt," caused by systemic denial of opportunity and access to students of historically marginalized cultures and identities, while also consciously decentering White norms and increasing visibility and exclusion of marginalized groups This definition also

leaves room for advocacy and activism on the part of educators on behalf of the students they serve.

The second and equal component is the redistribution of educational opportunities and resources to better serve those same groups that have been historically marginalized. This includes money, power, and access that has been denied to many students. This egalitarian redistributive claim (Fraser, 1998) has also shaped many other types of social justice movements for generations. Like most social justice movements, educational social justice then incorporates both social and economic changes. Both are necessary for systemic change and present unique challenges to those advocating for those social justice causes, including education. Practitioners and theorists alike struggle with the potential tensions between these two concepts, yet research suggests that an integration of both parts is key in the actualization of social justice (Cho, 2017). The challenge remains how to enact and embrace both parts in practice, particularly on a broad scale.

As it relates to teaching, it is widely agreed that social justice is not just what teachers do but how and why they do what they do (Hackman, 2005; North, 2009; Villegas, 2007). It is not merely a set of activities or methods, but rather a mindset and intellectual understanding of why and how teaching can address social inequities (Cochran-Smith, 2009). In this sense, social justice is a praxis, not a practice (Cochran-Smith, 2009), meaning it involves an interaction of theory and actions. This seems to fit Fraser's (1998) argument in that social justice teaching is concerned with both how teachers distribute goods and the mindset or beliefs about inclusion and recognition of cultural differences they hold. Instruction and curriculum are the goods that need to be redistributed among students of all backgrounds and to be delivered in ways that increase access for all students. By thoughtful consideration of students' multiple identities, teachers

11

intentionally decenter dominant norms or standards to be more inclusive (Cochran-Smith, 2009).

Therefore, in preparing teachers for the classroom, social justice cannot be simply about

methods, but must also be about the interpretative frames or filters teachers apply when looking

at their students (Cochran-Smith, 2009, p. 456).

One way researchers have tried to identify this important element of teaching is

discussing teacher dispositions. Villegas (2007) distilled various definitions by describing

dispositions as the tendencies for individuals to act in a particular manner under particular

circumstances. A disposition is a behavior, not a character trait. She goes on to describe the

importance of addressing and assessing teacher dispositions in teacher preparation programs in

order for new teachers to remain committed to teaching for social justice throughout their

careers. Teaching for social justice and teachers' roles in the proliferation of instruction is a

critical way to support the aims of educational social justice, such as representation of all

students and the equitable redistribution of resources as defined by Fraser (1998).

When discussing educational social justice, the most impactful leaders commit to

prioritize the aims of social justice in all their decision-making. Part of this type of leadership is

acknowledging and anticipating resistance. These leaders are both resistors of old patterns of

marginalization and the target of resistance by those who oppose their agenda (Theoharis, 2007).

Considering the ways in which leaders address that resistance is a key part of that work;

however, less is known about how teachers, who may or may not be nominal "leaders,"

strategize and persevere through challenges including external resistance. This is even more

important when considering the complex social dynamics within a campus community when

teachers either take on or are given leadership positions (Smylie & Denny, 1990). In fact, one of

the barriers to teachers being successful leaders is sometimes other teachers (York-Barr & Duke,

2004), which suggests that this collegial resistance or nonacceptance is part of the reason why teachers may focus on addressing issues of social justice within their own classrooms.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

The term *culturally relevant pedagogy* (Ladson-Billings, 1995a) was developed by Dr. Gloria Ladson-Billings as a way to describe both a theory of teaching and the instructional practices of teachers who experienced pedagogical success (Ladson-Billings, 2014) in classrooms with predominately African American students. By identifying and labeling specific dispositions and practices, she inspired a generation of researchers and classroom teachers to think critically about the role culture must play in supporting the learning of all students, most especially those who had been left behind, pushed out, or forced to assimilate to school settings that erased or devalued their cultural identities and knowledge (Paris, 2012). Creating teachers who are consistent and skillful practitioners of CRP has become an objective of many teacher training programs (Sleeter, 2017). Newer researchers theorize that simply being responsive or relevant isn't enough, but that new teachers need to seek culturally sustaining pedagogy (CSP; Paris, 2012). Although research has proven the effectiveness of these practices in transforming the learning of all students, many veteran teachers have not received training and do not regularly incorporate CRP into their practices. In fact, many long-time teachers continue to perpetuate inequities (sometimes inadvertently) by continuing to use ineffective pedagogy that does not attend to the cultural or linguistic needs of their students (Hammond, 2015). This is not to say that all new teachers have adequate preparation, but a lack of training and disposition development within veteran teaching ranks suggests there are barriers to implementation of CRP.

13

There is also a growing body of work that talks about ways in which teachers are implementing CRP, and particularly the ways in which teacher training programs are attempting to prepare a predominately White teaching force to teach in increasingly diverse schools (Sleeter, 2017; Warren, 2018). However, there does not seem to be a great deal of literature that considers how these practices spread or grow across a campus or community of practice. There are well-known messengers and evangelists, but less is known about how CRP takes root and grows from individual teachers and classrooms to spread across a campus or community of practice. For example, in 2008, Morrison et al. attempted to explain how teachers operationalize CRP by synthesizing 45 classroom-based research studies. They found that many teachers were making difficult and deliberate changes to their classroom practices that reflected the three tenets of CRP, but that there were many challenges to making these changes systemic.

CRP asks us to meet students where they are and make learning congruent with their cultural experiences and identities (Ladson-Billings, 1995a). The three tenets of CRP are a starting point for many teachers looking to work towards greater equity and inclusion as a part of social justice in education. They likely guide the instructional practices of participating teacher leaders. Those three tenets are high academic expectations, cultural competence, and critical consciousness.

High expectations means that growth over time is valued as a measure of student learning and all students are expected to show growth. It is considering where students are starting with their academic skills and making gains over the course of a year. Students must develop their academic skills, but the skills they have must be celebrated and used as the basis for more learning.

Cultural competence means that students' own cultures must be respected and valued within the classroom. Students are not only allowed to keep their culture, but it is used as a vehicle for learning, so that school and academics are not seen as replacing or displacing it, but rather it is a source of knowledge. This is more than just representation of diverse racial and ethnic identities within the academic curriculum, but also skills of "cultural fluency" (Ladson-Billings, 2014) that allow students to navigate and thrive in a multicultural pluralistic world. In this sense, teachers must emphasize cultures as additive to their students' learning processes and must not require assimilation to succeed.

And finally, perhaps most importantly, *critical consciousness* is the development of a broader sociopolitical understanding that allows students to question existing norms and institutions that support continued inequality (Ladson-Billings, 1995b). Critical consciousness provides students with true relevance and significance to what they are learning. Critical consciousness is what leads to action, one could argue, and is proof of true learning beyond the classroom. More recently, Gholdy Muhammad (2020) has referred to "criticality" as the capacity for students to think, read, write, and speak in ways that understand power and equity so that they can challenge oppression. This means that teachers are explicitly teaching about systems of power and oppression and enabling students to analyze the world around them through a critical lens. This approach to teaching and learning is not a set of activities or strategies but rather a framework from which to build a teaching philosophy and praxis.

One of the challenges, if not ironies, of an increasingly diverse body of students attending public schools is the persistence and prevalence of Whiteness among the teachers of those students. Although CRP aims to find ways to support the success of Black, Brown, and Indigenous students and all students of color in order for them to thrive, it is often dependent

upon White teachers to make that happen. However, many researchers (Howard, 2003; Sleeter, 2001, 2017; Utt & Tochluk, 2020; Warren, 2018) are looking at teacher preparation programs and finding them ill equipped to prepare White teachers, even when they have an avowed commitment to CRP.

Additionally, CRP has been used in teacher training and professional learning environments to help develop critical self-reflection in teachers. New teachers can be trained to practice critical self-reflection on their own racial and cultural identities and how they impact their teaching as a means to implementing CRP (Howard, 2003). This requires greater self-reflection, both at the individual level by teachers and at the institutional level for the programs that are preparing these teachers (Sleeter, 2001, 2017; Utt & Tochluk, 2020; Warren, 2018). Without a willingness to engage deeply and honestly with Whiteness, it is unlikely that a teacher will truly come to see CRP as a disposition or framework from which to teach. It will be relegated to being a "toolbox" of isolated practices and activities. Unless teachers, particularly White teachers, come to embody the beliefs of CRP, students of color are likely to continue to experience schools as a place of marginalization and schooling as a process of adapting to White norms and standards.

In recent years, researchers have suggested ways to redefine, expand, and push the boundaries of the framework first established as CRP. Ideally, the goal is making formal public schooling and classrooms a place where students' identities are not only recognized but affirmed and growth is fostered. This concept of CSP explicitly calls for schools to be sites that not only promote linguistic and cultural dexterity but also are part of a shifting culture of power, challenging the hegemonic culture of English-only Whiteness and patriarchy (Paris, 2012). This may be one place where teacher leaders are defining their own leadership roles. Within a

progressive teaching community where many teachers believe they are already using CRP as their paradigm, there may still be a need to engage students (and colleagues) in developing critical consciousness or questioning established practices. Teachers on the forefront of this type of teaching may be those using their roles to push towards a mindset of sustaining student culture and humanizing school policies, whereas on campuses that have been less receptive to or aware of CRP, teacher leaders may still be leading by raising awareness or championing the shift towards teaching that is asset rather than deficit based.

The tenets of CRP are useful for evaluating or capturing the instructional "moves" and decisions that teachers make while teaching. In order to understand that decision-making process, a consideration of how and when teachers engage in self-reflection is necessary as well. Using those same tenets of CRP to shape the questions teachers ask themselves as they think about how they teach is important. Particularly, questions about critical consciousness where teachers see themselves in terms of power structures can foster thoughtful decisions about instruction. In terms of how teacher leaders may see themselves, this question may be a valuable one. If they are reflecting on their own role in inequitable systems, they may seek opportunities outside of their classroom in addition to within the curriculum to push for changes. The focuses on outcomes and shifts in power central to CRP and CSP are important to help understand why teachers make the decisions they do about instructional practices.

Teacher Leadership

One theme that runs throughout the research on teacher leadership is how difficult it is to summarize or generalize findings across studies due to the absence of a set role or duties of teacher leaders (Neumerski, 2013; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). So although the use of the term or concept of teacher instructional leadership has grown due to evolving demands on school reform

movements, it is hard to assess the impact of these roles, as they vary so much from school to school (Wenner & Campbell, 2017). This is similar to the challenges with defining social justice in education. Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009) offer a definition of teacher leaders that attempts to encompass the many ways teachers can be agents of change:

> Teacher leaders lead within and beyond the classroom; identify with and contribute to a community of teacher learners and leaders; influence others towards improved educational practice; and accept responsibility for achieving the outcomes of their leadership. (p. 6)

Without a clear, universal definition of teacher leadership, it is difficult to synthesize findings across studies. One gap in the literature is finding more direct connections between how teachers view themselves, as leaders in general as well as leaders for social justice, and ways in which social justice practices such as CRP takes root in the minds and practices of a school community

Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009) refer to the potential of teachers as leaders as the "sleeping giant," a tremendous source of change that hasn't yet been actualized. Teachers who have been in the classroom and experienced frustration with their lack of skills in reaching or connecting with students who do not look like them may also be adopting CRP as a lens or paradigm to improve or evolve their practice. Or they may be making curricular choices that they believe to be more relevant to their students without consciously adopting or labeling them CRP. However, there are limitations and challenges to studying teacher leadership as a means to growing educational social justice in a given school. Much like some of the critiques of CRP, teacher instructional leadership is believed to have great potential for improving student learning, but neither has enough empirical evidence to say conclusively they contribute to improved student achievement. This is perhaps due in part to the challenge of defining student achievement. Furthermore, there have been very few studies on how teacher instructional

leadership, however it is defined, impacts outcomes for student learning (Mangin & Stoelinga, 2009).

Teachers as instructional leaders is a concept that has been linked to school reform movements (Wenner & Campbell, 2017), recognizing that both leadership and classroom instruction are key elements of improving student outcomes. It has also been a source of interest to researchers as it relates to accountability, which has been one component of school reform (136). In both research areas, the focus has been on teachers as individual contributors and focused on the actions of individual teachers who have been given leadership titles and responsibilities. Regardless of what teacher leaders are labeled or asked to do, there continue to be questions of how much teachers actually feel able to act within these roles. The question of teacher agency has not been well defined in an ecological framework, yet contributes greatly to what teachers are able to do as leaders (Priestley et al., 2015). I will explore the research on teacher agency in the following section.

Teacher Agency

Desire for change or a commitment to social justice is not enough on its own to create leaders who act. Agency, simply defined, is the capacity for someone to act. In the case of teachers, it has been poorly understood as a part of how teachers act as change makers (Priestley et al., 2015). Just as a socioecological view of social justice leadership widens the view of how and why leaders are able to lead, an ecological perspective on how and why teachers are able to act is also needed. As previously mentioned, the title of teacher leader does not make someone a leader, even if the role is well defined. Teacher agency, or the perceived ability for a teacher to act, is an important factor to consider when discussing whether or not teachers take on the lead on educational change. It must be seen as more than just a personal characteristic or something

19

teachers have or lack (Priestley et al., 2015). Teacher agency is not only the capacity to act but the structures and support to do so. In this sense, it is not just the quality of the individual but is dependent on engagement with the environment. This matters because this means that agency is something that can be enhanced through organizational efforts and public policy (Priestley et al., 2015; Smylie & Denny, 1990).

For teachers to emerge as instructional leaders for any kind of change, they need to be motivated or committed to the desired change. The commitment to educational social justice or curricular changes (Leander & Osborne, 2008) may be a strong motivator for participating. However, they must also have a sense of agency, or a sense that they are able to act and their actions will result in those desired outcomes. Assuming a socioecological perspective, this requires a consideration of the complex interactions and interplay among the different settings and systems within the school. This includes formal leadership structures and titles as well as cultural norms and traditions within the school community.

In Fraser's (1998) model of social justice as both representative and redistributive, developing agency may provide a move towards increasing the diversity of those in leadership roles. The socioecological understanding that individuals do not act in isolation from other systems and forces suggests that greater representation may also lead to policies that redistribute resources and decision-making power. The goals of CRP are similar in that teachers work within classrooms to provide instruction that supports both greater identity affirmation and critical understanding of the power dynamics that have upheld oppression. Taken all together, the integration of these two theories offers one possible explanation as to the role teachers play in fostering educational social justice.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Research Design and Overview

This study uses qualitative methods to explore the experiences of teachers as leaders of educational social justice. Qualitative researchers are interested in how people make sense of their world and experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), and investigating how these teachers view their own role as leaders, including their role as practitioners and advocates for social justice and systemic change, is the broad aim of this study. Teachers' own words and experiences provide a deeper understanding of how teachers serve as disseminators of culturally centered, potentially disruptive approaches to teaching as well as what barriers keep teachers limited in their instructional leadership reach. This chapter provides an overview of research methodology, participant selection, and data collection and analysis used to address the research questions. There are five sections: Participants, Data Collection, Data Analysis, Results, and Positionality and Reflexivity.

The research questions guiding this study were

1. How do teacher leaders define leading for educational social justice in their own roles?

2. What factors do teacher leaders identify that support their efforts for social justice teaching?

3. What barriers do teacher leaders identify as impacting their social justice goals?

Participants

In order to identify participants, I worked through the University of California at Davis History Project (UCDHP), a professional learning organization that recruits and employs classroom teachers to lead professional developments for other teachers. UCDHP seeks out

teachers who demonstrate a commitment to inquiry-based instruction, with a focus on literacy and equity. Per their website, "Our professional learning programs respond to the needs of teachers and local educational agencies in order to strengthen teacher capacity and develop teacher leadership" (UCDHP, 2021). Working with an organization that explicitly names developing teacher leadership as a purpose, and refers to its contributors as teacher leaders, bounds how I identified participants. By using participants who were already named as teacher leaders, I had a clear starting point as to why their experiences were those of teacher leaders.

The current partisan debates surrounding social justice and school curriculum generally, and history content specifically, provide additional relevance to working with social studies teachers. I chose to focus on secondary teachers who had worked with UCDHP/a content-area organization so participants only taught social studies. There were originally 18 teacher leaders invited to participate via email (Appendix A). Eight agreed to complete the survey and returned responses. Of the eight survey respondents, five identified as women and three as men. I did not ask for demographic information on the survey. All taught social studies in public schools and none were teaching at the same school. Two of them taught middle school; the remaining six all taught in high schools. Based on their responses, I conducted three semistructured interviews. I identified interview participants based on their responses specifically to questions about defining social justice. These participants included one white male bilingual middle school teacher and two white female high school teachers.

Data Collection

I received approval from the University of California, Davis, Institutional Review Board on January 25, 2022, to collect data to conduct my study. There were two methods of data collection. The first round was a survey with written responses. It collected background

information about the participating teachers, including their teaching experience and leadership roles they currently held or had held. This provided information for identification (Saldaña, 2016) and allowed me to consider how definitions of leadership varied across experience levels. Participants completed a Google Survey (Appendix B) that allowed them to answer questions in their own words with as much time as they needed. The intention of these questions was to see how they would define teacher leadership and educational social justice, as well as how they saw themselves within that definition. It also provided them a chance to explain what social justice teaching meant to them. This survey was also used as a screening process upon which interview participants were selected based on their definitions.

Participants received an email from the director of the UCDHP sent on my behalf inviting them to participate in the research survey. The survey was set up through Google Forms and asked participants to contact me directly with questions or concerns. Participants supplied first names and emails, but no other identifiable information was collected. I used pseudonyms for participants during coding. Eight teachers responded to the survey. The survey was available from February 1 to March 2, 2022.

From the eight survey respondents, I contacted four participants for interviews. Three of them accepted. All three interviews were conducted in person and lasted between 45 and 65 minutes. I received permission to record all three interviews and had them transcribed by an online transcription service. Interviews were conducted on March 6, 13, and 15, 2022.

For the follow-up interviews, some questions were based upon the written responses, specifically following up on any repeated or frequently used terms to unpack for the purpose of deeper analysis. It was important to understand how teachers talk about themselves (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The purpose of the interviews was to uncover the experiences of teachers with

specific sources of support to social justice work as well as challenges. Additionally, teacher

participants were able to expand upon how ideas about social justice motivated or shaped their

teaching. The preplanned questions (Appendix C) asked about how they described their own role

as teacher leaders. I also asked about their impact on instruction within their own campus and

community of practice. I followed up about various levels or locations of barriers and challenges

to influencing other teachers, particularly systemic roadblocks such as district policies. I closed

each interview with asking about how teachers could take on greater roles as leaders for social

justice.

Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis is cyclical rather than linear (Saldaña, 2016) and required that I

look at the data many times over, with different eyes each time, to render the most salient

interpretations. I first organized the attribute information participants provided about how long

they had taught, how long they had been at their current site, and leadership positions they

currently held or had held in the past. This provided initial context into how they defined their

leadership roles and social justice. Table 1 summarizes participants' experiences.

Table 1. Participant Experience

Participant	Years teaching	Years at site	Department chair (current or former)	Cooperating/ mentor teacher	Other leadership positions currently held
Tracy	18	10		X	Equity Team
Jason	21	9	X	X	
Jenny	10	1		X	School Site Council Student activities director
Patty	21	16	X		Student activities director Member of Instructional Quality Committee (statewide)
Melissa	15	4	X	X	PLC lead Student activities director WASC coordinator
Seth	8	8	X	X	
Sarah	10	10	X		New Teacher mentor (Induction program)
John	21	21	X		PLC lead SLC lead New teacher mentor (induction program) DEI team member

Note. Bold type indicates interview participants. PLC = Professional Learning Community; WASC = Western Association of Schools and Colleges; SLC = Small Learning Community; DEI = Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.

Results

Survey Responses

I began with the survey responses. I first read over responses carefully, precoding by underlining or highlighting phrases that seemed meaningful to possibly unpack later. The second time through, I underlined words or shorter phrases, looking for patterns or repeated

25

language/ideas. The third time, I began open coding by annotating potential explanations and initial thoughts on phrases and language (Saldaña, 2016).

At this point, I wrote analytical memos creating preliminary answers to my first research question, how they defined leading for educational social justice, by summarizing each participant's answers. From these notes, I started a list of keywords or phrases/terms that were used by more than one participant. I pulled their own words and quotes to use in vivo coding.

Using the initial open codes and in vivo codes, I created a list of similar words that participants used. I annotated those words and then pulled the quotes for each time the words or term was used. This created my very preliminary codebook. Once I had that recorded, I noticed categories that connected multiple terms, a process of axial coding (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). For example, when participants talked about teacher leaders being "helpful," I also saw how it linked to them also being "mentors." The idea that connects both of these codes is that teacher leadership is about service to others.

As I read through participants' definitions of teacher leadership, I looked for and noted frequently used words or phrases from within a single response as well as across all responses. From this, I developed preliminary or theoretical codes for later data. Additionally, I looked at the responses through the lens of a socioecological framework for educational social justice. This involved looking for evidence of the five systems outlined by Bronfenbrenner (1976). Identifying these systems within the participants' responses helped direct and refine my interview questions in order to better understand the factors that shape their leadership.

When I began to analyze the responses to the question about identifying as a social justice advocate, I noticed a continuum of responses. Few respondents gave a definitive yes or no response. Using magnitude coding, I created a scale or spectrum of participant responses based

on strength of affirmation. I noticed that most were reluctant to say yes but instead talked about wanting to be one but not quite living up to the definition as the participant saw it. I coded these responses as "aspirational." I started with those who said an unqualified yes and moved down to those who said no.

I continued in vivo and open coding for the definitions of educational social justice (Saldaña, 2016). There were a few emerging themes. Access, inclusion, and content/instruction all engage in the mesosystem. These are all "close in" to students and teachers and largely happen in the classroom or at the individual school level. Systemic issues and advocacy are further out in the exo- and macrosystems. So the emerging definition of educational social justice was one that was both personal and institutional.

Interview Transcripts

Once I had conducted all three of my interviews, I used a professional transcription service to transcribe each of my recordings. I checked each transcript for accuracy by listening to the audio recording while reviewing the text. After that process, I wrote down some immediate thoughts or notes of what stood out to me during each interview to revisit during coding and analysis.

I started open coding each transcript. I marked and commented on any phrases or responses that were interesting or informative, keeping my research questions in mind. After each individual interview, I wrote analytical memos recording any main ideas or themes that I heard within that participant's answers. These memos and my notes from reviewing the audio were used to write the participant vignettes that are included in the findings chapter. Once I had those vignettes written, I shared them with the three participants for corrections or comments (Appendix D). This member check helped with reliability (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Following a similar process as with the survey data, I used a combination of in vivo and pattern coding. I entered all the preliminary codes into a new codebook. From that, I began to group codes into categories, from which I began to see themes emerge about how teachers were experiencing social justice teaching.

I did another round of coding through a socioecological lens, looking for the sources or support of and barriers to social justice teaching. First, I sorted using the labels "support" and "barriers" to answer each research question. Next, using Bronfenbrenner's (1976) systems as identifying emerging themes from the data, the theoretical framework provided the themes in order to organize the findings.

Positionality and Reflexivity

Although teachers are not a marginalized group, I know we often feel like we are oppressed by educational "experts" looking for scapegoats. It is important for me to remember that groups do not want to feel researched "on" but rather researched "with" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Gathering data from teachers who work with the same organization as me and who have the same title as me runs the risk of being too close to the subject. At the same time, looking in a mirror is often more compelling than staring out a window. My perspective(s) feel paradoxically limited and expansive: limited in that being a White, female, veteran teacher gives me a very specific and potentially narrow experience of the world, yet that very limitation opens my eyes to how many other experiences there are and how important it is to recognize that when considering data and observations.

Having worked as a teacher leader with the UCDHP for about 10 years granted me access to and trust from the teachers I interviewed. We had planned, presented and participated in

professional developments together over the years. These common experiences and shared

pedagogical perspective allowed participants to be more comfortable sharing their experiences

with me. That shared context made it easier to ask direct questions, as participants knew I

already had some knowledge of their professional experiences and perspective. Having worked

with most of the participants in this context only, I designed and asked questions meant to gather

information about their other areas of leadership and teaching experiences. My role was one that

combined insider and outsider status (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

At the beginning of this school year, I started a new job in a new school district. I am no

longer a full-time classroom teacher but rather an interventions specialist, working with a

designated caseload of ninth-grade students. In this capacity, I am also working closely with

English language arts teachers. This experience is strengthening my belief that the need for

greater, more explicit work towards educational social justice is urgent. Conversations and

policies at the district level are often disconnected from the reality of the classroom and are in no

way a sufficient solution. Moreover, there is what is referred to by the teachers I work with as the

"implementation gap." This means that decisions or plans made at the district level (or above) do

not get put into practice at the school and classroom level. Without having teachers involved in a

meaningful way in both crafting and implementing those plans, they are unlikely to be successful

in achieving greater representation for marginalized students or redistributing resources to them.

The position I now hold is in between those two levels in a way that is shaping my view on these

issues that I did not previously consider.

Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the ways teacher leaders define educational social justice and their own roles as teacher leaders. Asking teacher leaders directly what these terms mean to them, in addition to what factors support or challenge their work, provides insight into how teachers experience the work towards greater educational social justice within their school and increased equity for students. The research questions addressed in this study are

1. How do teacher leaders define and experience leading for educational social justice?

2. What factors do teacher leaders identify that support their efforts for social justice teaching?

3. What challenges do teacher leaders identify as impacting their social justice goals?

Data were collected from eight participants from a written survey and from interviews with three selected participants. As stated in Chapter 3, survey data gathered information about participants' leadership experience as well as their definitions of teacher leadership and educational social justice (Appendix B). The interviews elaborated upon these ideas and focused on the ways in which these teachers were either supported or challenged in their social justice objectives (Appendix C). The data sets were analyzed separately to answer the research questions, then synthesized for connections to existing literature and implications for policy and practice.

Teacher Leadership as a Concept

The analysis of participant survey responses revealed three emergent themes that define teacher leadership, according to teacher leaders themselves. The first theme is leadership through service. This includes the ways helping others is a defining feature of a leader. The second

theme, leadership by example, illustrates the importance of leaders being role models or exemplars among their colleagues. The final theme is leadership as a process rather than a position. Participants provided insight that teacher leadership is gained through a process of ongoing growth and as part of a campus community rather than by obtaining a job title. Taken together, these three themes paint a complex picture of characteristics and actions that shape the meaning of teacher leadership.

Theme 1: Leadership Through Service

Although there is no single agreed-upon definition of teacher leadership, the responses shared by participants reflected the belief that leaders work to help or serve colleagues for the benefit of the school community. A leader is one who is willing to assist and support other teachers in addition to their own teaching duties. Melissa stated that "being a teacher leader means taking on extra responsibilities inside and outside the classroom." This suggests that in order to lead, teachers contribute to the school community by doing additional work that benefits both students and adults in the campus community. Sarah also described teacher leaders as "helpful," further building the idea that teacher leadership exists in serving others or providing assistance. None of the participants' definitions used any language about teacher leaders being selected or asked to provide help or service to others, which suggests that this willingness to serve and help others is a choice teacher leaders make that perhaps sets them apart from other teachers and earns them respect from others.

In addition to support, Patty, Seth, and Jason all said that teacher leaders also "inspire" others to strive to improve or become better. In this sense, teacher leaders are not just examples of exemplary professionalism but also inspirational or aspiration models as well. As such, teacher leaders were also described as "continuing to learn and grow" by Melissa and "constantly

31

looking to better themselves" by Sarah. They are "lifelong learners," according to John. They also participate and guide collaboration, although no participants mentioned specific titles or official roles in their definitions. Overall, participant responses described a teacher whose leadership is defined by their commitment to bringing their best selves and efforts to benefit and motivate others.

One specific way in which teacher leaders were described as providing service to others was through mentoring. John's definition began with this emphasis on service through mentorship: "Teacher leadership amongst other teachers is to be a supportive mentor who helps new teachers survive…" In this sense, teacher leaders are those who not only possess skills and knowledge through years of experience, but offer to guide and support newer colleagues. Connecting this to social justice would then mean that leadership is defined by those who are willing and able to assist others to develop their practice that includes a commitment to educational social justice. For social studies teachers, this would include collaborating around historically accurate curriculum and teaching about injustices, particularly with new teachers still developing their praxis. Leaders take on these roles, or, as Jenny stated, "opt to support colleagues" rather than leading by directing others. Teacher leaders are seen by these participants as those who take on the work in the service of others. In turn, leading through service also suggests an idea of leading by example.

The idea that teacher leaders are those who voluntarily take on additional responsibilities in service to their colleagues aligns with what has been previously discussed in research (Wenner & Campbell, 2017). The participants' definitions reflect the idea that teacher leadership is an individual action wherein a teacher chooses to help others rather than being asked or chosen to lead, reinforcing findings that schools do not generally seek out and develop teachers as leaders

(Smylie & Eckert, 2018). The belief that teachers should seek out ways to help others is one that underpins much of how teachers often view their own jobs (Siera & Siera, 2011) yet, as the participants' definitions imply, there is not necessarily a formal or official capacity in which teachers lead. The idea of teacher leaders as self-appointed helpers rather than officially recognized authorities is consistent with the frequent refrain throughout existing literature that teacher leadership is an abstract and idiosyncratic concept (Neumerski, 2013; York-Barr & Duke, 2004).

Theme 2: Leadership by Example

The theme of leadership by example is closely related to the theme of leadership through service. However, participants indicated that they hold acts of service or helping separate from the leadership provided by professional behavior and identity. Teachers lead through service, but they also lead by example, serving as exemplars or role models for others to emulate or follow. In her definition of teacher leadership, Patty said teacher leaders should be "a role model not only for colleagues but for students as well." This suggests that teacher leaders are looked to as embodiments of the characteristics other teachers and students should aspire to achieve. As an identified teacher leader, John recognized the importance of leading by example when he stated, "I also try to be a model of a professional," implying that others look to him as a standard of behavior to emulate. Speaking up for greater student access or seeking to include student voices might be two social justice characteristics demonstrated by a teacher leader, in this definition. Teachers can lead by showing how it is done, by serving as an example of how to work towards social justice objectives.

Beyond just passively leading by example, multiple participants elaborated that teacher leaders also "inspire," suggesting that others would be motivated by their example. Seth stated

33

that teacher leadership means "inspiring colleagues to want to improve." By being model professionals and demonstrating a visible level of competency, teachers can inspire or motivate others to want to improve their practice. Such improvement may be developing a more inclusive curriculum or working towards closing gaps in achievement. Teacher leaders are described as those whose exemplary performance of their own jobs provides an example for others to follow as well as motivating or inspiring them to want to do the same. Taken together, leadership through service and leadership by example show that being a teacher leader means walking the walk rather than talking the talk. The final theme further expands the idea of leaders being those who walk the walk as a continuous process, not a one-time job title or position.

Participants' descriptions of teacher leaders as role models and outstanding professionals are consistent with other attempts to define teacher leadership (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). This informal role has both benefits and limitations for the impact of teachers as leaders. This idea of the best, most effective or skillful teachers serving as role models to inspire or motivate others is powerful in that it does not enforce a hierarchy on teachers who are accustomed to an egalitarian profession (Darling-Hammond et al., 1995). Leading by example also has limits, because there is no consequence if colleagues choose to disregard or ignore the example provided by exceptional fellow teachers. There can also be an adverse effect on teachers who are perceived to aspire to rise above their colleagues. Even without an official leadership title, teachers who are often held up as excellent or outstanding in their abilities are sometimes disparaged or disrespected by their peers because they are seen as upsetting the "radical egalitarianism" that characterizes teacher culture on most campuses (York-Barr & Duke, 2004).

Theme 3: Leadership as a Process, Not a Position

None of the participants included any titles or positions in their definitions of teacher leadership. This runs contrary to the hierarchical model of school leadership that dominates most public secondary schools. In their use of characteristics and behaviors to define teacher leadership, it emerges that leadership is a process rather than a position or job title. Not only does leadership mean providing mentoring and service while also serving as a role model to inspire others, but it is also a continuous, ongoing process in which teacher leaders engage.

Part of this ongoing process of teacher leadership is continuous growth and development. John called a teacher leader a "lifelong learner." Similarly, Melissa included "continuing to learn and grow" in her definition. Embedded in both is the idea that leader isn't a one-time designation that a teacher takes on or earns, but rather it is an active process. Much like the themes of service and example, this reinforces the idea that defining teacher leadership is based on actions and characteristics, not a particular title or role. Sarah affirmed that teacher leaders are "constantly looking to better themselves," which means that one does not arrive at being leader as an end but it is the means that justify being known as a leader.

For this to apply to teachers leading for education social justice, teachers must be constantly learning and improving their own understanding of systemic injustices and historical content that they may not have learned in their own education. An additional part of the process of teacher leadership is collaboration. Participating and taking the lead in the collaborative process is part of the definition of teacher leadership constructed by participants and a way to achieve the curricular goals of social justice. In fact, in their definitions of teacher leadership, Tracy included "leading the way in collaborative site groups" and John used the term "collaborator," emphasizing the importance of working with others as an ongoing process of

leadership. According to the survey data, this process of leading is both external and internal for teachers. It is observable through the acts of service they perform as well as their professional example setting and collaboration. It is also a personal experience of continuous growth and learning, which may not be immediately visible to colleagues, but expresses itself through informed actions.

Participants' relying on actions and characteristics rather than titles or positions to describe teacher leadership is in line with two important and consistent themes in the existing literature. First, there is no established, universal definition of teacher leadership (York-Barr & Duke, 2004; Wenner & Campbell, 2017). Because there is not a job called "teacher leader" on most campuses, teachers are seen or called leaders based on their professionalism, behavior, and demonstrated competence. Although this may imply that teachers who are viewed as leaders by their peers are more authentically leaders or have earned their authority, it may also create limits to the impact these very same teachers can have when it comes to making lasting and meaningful changes to campus practices. This relates to the second theme found in literature, that there are systemic and structural challenges to teacher leadership (Mangin & Stoelinga, 2009; Priestley et al., 2015; Smylie & Denny, 1990; Wenner & Campbell, 2017; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Without structural support, even the most respected teacher is limited in their leadership capacity. So although professionals who seek personal growth, demonstrate exemplary professionalism, and show a high degree of competence are valuable in any workplace, without official and formal positions of leadership, schools may be missing out on an opportunity to maximize the impact of the most respected teachers.

Social Justice Advocate as Identity

Participants were asked how they defined educational social justice. The majority of participants mentioned specific curricular choices about content as part of the definition. Teaching about injustice ("To educate students about continued injustices in society," [John]) and addressing inaccurate curriculum that may have been taught in the past ("actively working to correct historical inaccuracies and revision…" [Tracy]) are ways teachers described these curricular choices. As history teachers, the participants saw what they taught as part of the effort to work towards greater social justice in schools. Put succinctly, Sarah wrote that educational social justice meant "teachers who are committed to teaching truth."

In addition to factual content, educational social justice also requires an inclusive curriculum that represents and meets the needs of all students. Jenny described it as "instructional changes that conscientiously address the needs and voice of all students …" Tracy was more specific in stating that teachers need to be "working from a decolonized and antiracist approach to not only be more inclusive in an approach to education." For these history teachers, the definition of educational social justice included a focus on what was taught in order to ensure it represented the experiences and perspectives of all students within their own classrooms.

Educational social justice, as defined by the participants, also requires looking beyond their own content and classroom to make school a more inclusive place for all students. Both Sarah and Jenny used the term "welcoming" as a goal for how school needs to feel. Part of that inclusion is access to educational opportunities and the resources necessary to fully participate in education. Patty stated it the most clearly in saying that education social justice for students means leaders must "ensure that they have access to what they need."

A part of making education accessible as well as inclusive means confronting and addressing it on a systemic level, according to participants' definitions. Half of the participants referred to the "education system," recognizing that education not only operates within larger political or social systems subject to social justice movements but is itself a system requiring its own social justice efforts. More pointedly, participants named education as a system that has marginalized and excluded groups of students while privileging others, thus perpetuating injustices. Educational social justice means combating those systemic inequities directly. As such, some participants included advocacy as part of the definition of educational social justice. Melissa included in her definition "helping advocate for systemic change" as a key part of what educational social justice means for teachers.

In their definitions of educational social justice, participants stated the need to confront systemic and historical barriers that cause unequal and inequitable access to education. In those definitions, education can be seen as a system that prevents all students from achieving. Jenny described that part of educational social justice is "to consider the system of education," implying that education itself needs to be looked at as a whole rather than just addressing particular policies or practices. In this vein, participants also included advocating for changes within the system as part of defining education social justice. Both Melissa and Jenny used "advocate" or "advocacy" in their explanations, and Pam, Jason, and Tracy referred to working towards changes in how education operates.

Despite these definitions, the responses regarding their personal identification as social justice advocates suggest that even teachers who demonstrate a commitment to the goals of social justice may not embrace the title of advocate. The analysis of their written responses indicates that these teacher leaders had varied ideas about what it meant to be a social justice

advocate in their own practice. From their responses, a continuum emerged as to how much they identified with the title social justice advocate. Within this continuum, there were qualifiers or criteria that characterized why they did or did not identify with the title. Two interrelated themes capture the nature of these qualifiers that show that social justice advocate, as an identity, is aspirational for these teachers and action-based.

Table 2 shows this continuum of responses, from those who fully identified as social justice advocates (Tracy and Jason) to those who seemed to reject the identity (Sarah and John). The remaining participants (Jenny, Patty, Melissa, and Seth) did not fully identify with the title, but provided qualifiers or conditions as to why. The continuum of responses indicates that none of the teacher leaders outright oppose the goals or importance of teachers as social justice advocates, but rather, they have specific ideas about what qualifies as social justice advocacy and why they do or do not fit those criteria.

Table 2. Participants' Self-Identification as Social Justice Advocate

Name	To what extent do you identify as a social justice advocate?	Qualifier
Tracy	"Definitely"	"I work to build empathy in the classroom, help students discuss challenging topics in respectful ways, to decolonize world history, to focus not only on acts of oppression, but more so on acts of resistance."
Jason	"Very much so"	"I do more at school than I do in my personal life. It's more clear to me what meaningful action looks like at school."
Jenny	"Novice"	"But also plan to be a lifelong learner."
Patty	"I hope"	"But I feel I have a long way to go."
Melissa	"I would describe myself as someone who believes in social justice … but I am not on the front lines …"	"… I'm not putting in the work like I should be."
Seth	"Part of me wishes I did"	"Part of me finds those titles to be self-congratulatory."
Sarah	"I don't think I have ever said…"	"However, I do think it defines a lot of what I do as a teacher."
John	"I tell my students it's not my job to tell them what to think but to teach them how to think …"	"I don't tell my students my political beliefs."

Social Justice Advocate: Identity, Aspiration, or Action Based?

Teacher leaders in the survey indicated that social justice advocate was an aspirational identity. Patty stated this most directly by answering, "I hope but I feel I still have a long way to go." Even as a veteran teacher with 21 years' experience, she showed that she saw social justice advocacy as an ongoing objective that requires ongoing development. Jenny reflected a similar view on the aspirational nature of identifying as a social justice advocate because, although she

called herself a "novice," she added that she "plans to be a lifelong learner" who was continuously working on improving her understanding of what it means to advocate for social justice. Even Seth, whose response showed a level of ambivalence, said, "Part of me wishes I did," demonstrating that it is a desirable or positive identity.

Embedded in these responses is an element of inadequacy or falling short of being a full-fledged social justice advocate. It is implied that there is an ideal to achieve or certain conditions that must be met in order to deserve or be entitled to identify as a social justice advocate. Tracy, who gave the most affirmative answer that she "definitely" identified with the title, immediately justified her response with examples of what she did that met the unstated criteria of social justice advocate. She enumerated specific actions that she felt fit the definition of what it takes to be a social justice advocate. By saying she worked to "build empathy in the classroom" and "help students discuss challenging topics in respectful ways," Tracy cited two ongoing actions she took in her teaching that qualified as social justice advocacy. She continued and included that in her teaching she was able "to decolonize world history, to focus not only on acts of oppression, but more so on acts of resistance." Tracy's strong identification was based on ongoing and deliberate actions she took in the course of her teaching, which fit her criteria of educational social justice as "working from a decolonized and antiracist approach…actively working to correct historical inaccuracies…and empowering student agency in the present."

Contrasting Tracy's strong identification with Melissa's self-assessment demonstrates the aspirational nature of the social justice advocate label. Melissa stated a commitment to the principles of social justice work, describing herself as "someone who believes in social justice, who teaches students about systemic issues in society…" and stopped short of saying that made her a social justice advocate. She went on to qualify her answer with, "But I am not the person

41

on the front lines advocating for change." In this, she differentiated between believer and advocate and implied that she did not see her teaching as advocacy. Although she did teach through a lens of questioning systemic outcomes, Melissa connected advocacy with more direct action. Unlike Tracy, who cited her teaching practices as that direct action, Melissa closed her definition by saying, "I'm not putting in the work like I should be." Her self-assessment illustrates she did not see herself as engaging in enough direct work to fully qualify as a social justice advocate.

Even the participants who stated that they did not identify with the social justice advocate title expressed a value of actions or work towards social justice rather than the nominal designation. Sarah did not express social justice advocate as an aspiration, explaining, "I don't think I have ever said, 'I am a social justice advocate…'" Yet her connection to the actions of social justice advocacy came through with the prepositional rejoinder, "However, I do think that it does define a lot of what I do as a teacher." So although she does not embrace the title, she did see the actions of social justice advocacy in her own teaching and as an explicit goal when she concluded, "I teach to bring about social change and to make a more just world." Whereas Jason was at the opposite end of the continuum in self-identification, he elaborated his affirmation with, "I do more at school than in my personal life. It's more clear to me what meaningful action looks like at school." Again, he was able to say he "very much so" identified as a social justice advocate because his professional actions met his own criteria of advocacy. He contrasted this with his personal life, which emphasized that "meaningful action" was what solidified his claim to the title.

The definitions of teacher leaders, however, did not necessarily include advocacy as a key component or characteristic. Sarah described teacher leaders as "helpful," and they are the

kind of colleague who offers to take on "extra responsibilities" according to Melissa. John and Jenny both included mentorship as part of teacher leadership, suggesting that being supportive of colleagues is an important part of being a teacher leader. Patty referred to a teacher leader as a "role model" to both colleagues and students. These definitions imply that a teacher leader provides an example for others to emulate and volunteers to assist colleagues and provide support for others.

Vignettes of Interview Participants

The second phase of data collection involved interviews with teacher leaders. The interview participants were selected after the preliminary analysis of their survey responses. The interviews were intended to allow these participants to expand upon their responses about teacher leadership, educational social justice, and advocacy. They were also intended to address the second and third research questions regarding the challenges and sources of support for social justice work and leadership as teachers. Interviews were conducted in March 2022, about halfway through the third quarter of the school year.

The vignettes of the three interviewees provide greater context and elaboration on their definitions of teacher leadership for social justice. The realities and demands of being a teacher who is motivated by beliefs in social justice complicate the question of leading for social justice or working towards more systemic changes in education.

Tracy

Tracy is a high school world history teacher. She has been teaching for 18 years "or so" and at her current school for 10 years. She is on both her site and district equity teams. In the past, she has been a cooperating teacher, hosting and mentoring student teachers and has been a consultant and teacher leader with UC Davis History Project. Although she comes from a family

of teachers, she did not initially intend to go into education. After a brief time working in journalism, she decided to become a teacher, pursuing her social studies credential at UC Davis. According to her survey responses, Tracy defines leading for social justice as deliberate work through a lens of decolonization and antiracism. She sees it as changing curriculum to be more inclusive as well as corrective of past inaccuracies. It is collaborative work but not without direct leaders. It requires curricular changes within the classroom in order to empower students. I chose her for an interview based on her response indicating a strong identification as a social justice advocate. I wanted to be able to explore why she felt this way as well as her experiences as a teacher leading for social justice.

In our interview, Tracy expressed that social justice is what drives her teaching. She believes that social studies teachers have a more direct responsibility for teaching for social justice, particularly as it comes to discussing current events, but all teachers have the responsibility for a more inclusive curriculum. Her background in journalism also shaped her approach to teaching current events, emphasizing that students must learn how to understand bias and be "savvy media consumers." She viewed a critical goal of her teaching to be developing citizenship skills. In both her survey and interview, Tracy used the term "decolonized" to characterize her approach and objective with curriculum. To her, this meant moving away from the traditional, Eurocentric narrative of world history that focuses on the motivations and perspectives of the colonizers. Instead, she worked to focus on the resistance offered by the people whose countries were being colonized. She pointed to this as also being a goal of department collaboration: looking through an equity lens to create a more inclusive curriculum.

Tracy identified prioritization as what was needed to allow for greater teacher leadership around social justice work. In order for teachers to feel empowered to take the lead on social

justice, administrators and district leaders need to show that it is a priority. They can do this by requiring department time be dedicated to questions of bias and representation and paying teachers to engage in that type of work. She said that districts should empower teachers by asking them what they need and "finding a way to value, acknowledge, validate" what teachers contribute.

Melissa

Melissa has been teaching high school social studies for 15 years. She left her previous site after 11 years, during which she had been a professional learning community (PLC) lead, department chair, student activities director, Western Association of Schools and Colleges accreditation coordinator, and new teacher advisor. She did, in her own words, "all the things." Four years ago, she changed schools in order to be closer to home. In her own telling, she has taken a smaller leadership role in her time at her current school. She is currently a PLC lead and class advisor as well as a cooperating or mentor teacher to a student teacher. She has also been a teacher leader with UC Davis History Project, focusing on U.S. history and government. Like Tracy, she comes from a family of teachers and also got her social studies credential from UC Davis. Based on her survey responses, Melissa defines leading for social justice as something related to, but not achieved through teaching alone. She believes that it requires systemic changes and that leaders must engage in multiple levels to make those changes. To her, it means continuing to grow and develop as a professional while also being willing to take on added responsibilities beyond the classroom. It is mentoring and leading for instructional/content changes, but it is not just about the teaching she does for her students. She called herself a believer and had been a leader in developing history curriculum that is more oriented to race and social justice. Yet she judged her own efforts as an advocate as incomplete or inadequate, saying

45

that she wasn't "putting in the work like I should." I chose Melissa to interview largely based on that last quote. I found her self-critique to be so interesting and that she articulated a feeling that was important to investigate regarding how teachers view their own roles in social justice work.

In her response to my first question about whether she considers her teaching to be social justice work, she said, "It definitely is." She went on that social justice is about getting students to think about the world around them and, from there, how to take action. Melissa was involved in the early implementation of a course called Race and Social Justice, which fulfills the current U.S. history requirement and also the forthcoming ethnic studies requirement in California. Much like Tracy, she felt that social studies bore an additional responsibility for addressing current events with an eye towards social justice. She said that COVID had added "another layer of complication" to her ideas about social justice. Observing that teachers have and perhaps continue to underestimate the amount of responsibility that teenage students take on at home, she thought that teachers got focused on the idea that "we're providing this service." That illuminates the way teachers and schools fail to see students as a "whole human."

Throughout the interview, Melissa expressed an uncertainty about whether or not her administrators would really back up teachers' attempts to foster discussion around uncomfortable and controversial topics relating to race. When asked what she thought would allow for greater teacher leadership or empowering teachers to take a greater lead in social justice work, her answer returned to that idea of confidence in support. Melissa is a queer woman and acknowledged that her marginalized identity contributes to her trepidation. She said she would "be more emboldened" knowing that her job was secure if she were to be challenged for her teaching. She said, poignantly, "I love teaching, I love my job. But I also need to have a job."

Seth

46

Seth is a middle school history teacher in a bilingual program. He has been teaching eight years, all of them at the same site. He teaches both seventh-grade world history and eighth-grade U.S. history. Both are taught largely in Spanish, and students are a combination of native speakers and Spanish learners. He is currently history department lead, which he describes as largely running meetings and trying to "corral us all to update curriculum." He has been involved as a teacher leader in the UC Davis History Project after learning about it while a credential student at UC Davis. In his survey, Seth said that he became a teacher because it was a good use of his history degree and it "doesn't make the world worse." Seth defined leading for educational social justice bluntly as trying to change people to be better. He believes it is making students be less racist and to see the inherent inequalities within capitalism. It is motivating or encouraging colleagues to improve their own practice but doesn't mean that they are in an official position of power. It is difficult to define, as an identity or as a well-defined action. Seth's survey answers were frank and direct in a way that I found amusing and provocative. His answer of "I wish I knew" to the question of defining teacher leadership reminded me of my own search for professional meaning. I wanted to hear more.

Throughout his survey and interview, Seth was reluctant to embrace simple labels or characterizations. To the question of whether his teaching was social justice work, he said, "I feel like there's different ways to answer that question," before asserting that he thought "teaching in general" should be social justice work. He repeated his survey answer that he was "trying to make kids less racist." By exposing students to new cultures as featured in the seventh-grade content standards and discussing slavery in historical and material terms in eighth grade, he believed he was accomplishing that, although he added that he didn't think about it in terms of social justice. Seth said he didn't necessarily like the "cultural connotations of social justice

47

warrior kind of thing." He was clearly heavily motivated by this specific content, even contending, "I don't love kids, I love history," and throughout the interview cited specific topics in the content as examples of different points he was making. He did, however, also express deep concerns about the gaps in his students' ability to read and write. Although his preference to emphasize historical content was clear, he conceded that focusing more on skills (such as summarizing or writing a paragraph) was "also important in terms of social justice or equity." Overall, though, he did see the content as the most important vehicle for fostering better understandings of race and power over time.

On the question of how teacher leaders can be empowered to take a greater lead in social justice work, Seth returned to an earlier theme of accountability. He spoke of how even within departments, it was up to individual teachers to update what and how they teach or to keep doing what they have always done. So in terms of allowing teachers who want to push for a more inclusive or progressive curriculum to make progress across a department, other teachers needed to be held accountable or responsible for implementing similar changes. He summarized it with, "I don't see how you have a productive relationship by trying to obligate anybody to do something different, especially when you are supposed to be coworkers or co-equal."

Teacher Leadership as Lived Experience

Three themes emerged from these interviews that continued to flesh out what it means to be a teacher leader for social justice at this specific place in time. The first was that social studies teachers make conscious curricular choices and learning objectives that supported social justice goals. The second was that social studies teachers are teaching within a larger political climate and must negotiate competing social and political context and beliefs. Finally, there is a personal

cost to teachers and their lived experience that demonstrates the impact of taking on social

justice teaching.

Theme 1: Teachers Make Curriculum Choices and Set Learning Objectives

And so from my teaching, I guess, I have always assumed that I'm trying to make kids less racist.

—Seth

Content, or what they choose to teach, was the starting point for all three interviewees to

discuss social justice. Because they were all social studies teachers, all felt it was part of their job

to make decisions about their content in order to better reflect the world in which students live.

Seth spoke of using the seventh-grade content standards to create opportunities for students to

reflect on their own understandings of culture and diversity:

> … for instance, talk about any particular cultural practices which you do in seventh
> grade, because you're like, in one month you're talking about, I don't know, East Asia,
> another month you're talking about West Africa. People do things differently in these
> places. The immediate reaction that's usually blurted out is "That's so weird!" … And
> using all of those as teachable moments to be like, all of this is just different in every
> society … So, even if you were to follow just the textbook, you could have that happen
> every once in a while. But I think that I try to use a lot of visual sources …

Seth wasn't necessarily adding new content outside the standards, but was choosing to highlight

and emphasis the content topics that would encourage the most discussion. Providing a global

perspective to students is part of the standards. In Seth's telling, comments that demand

unpacking or further interrogation like, "that's so weird!" provided more authentic or meaningful

opportunities to push student reflection than other activities.

Tracy also cited 10th-grade world history as an opportunity to make curricular choices

that either supported a dominant-culture narrative or exposed students to a more global

perspective:

> When I think of colonized curriculum, I think of European, Eurocentric. I think of
> emphasis more on the way the colonizers did the things and therefore, more empathy for

the colonizers as opposed to the ways in which colonized peoples both existed before and have continued to exist and have resisted and continued to resist. And it's not that. That narrative like colonizers took over and then eventually nations became independent; very different than that there were many ways of resisting and continuing to resist throughout time. So I've focused much more on the resistance than on the reasons for the colonizers to have done what they did.

These two examples illustrate the ways in which social studies teachers can reexamine and use their world history content to better represent diverse perspectives and experiences. In turn, this supports efforts for students to gain knowledge outside or beyond what they've learned in the past.

When making decisions about content to use or present, Melissa also discussed how more relatable or interesting topics increase student engagement and leads to more meaningful learning experiences. She spoke to sources she used in a U.S. history class shifting the way students viewed historical events as well as hooking students into the academic work:

> I think that when we talk about interesting topics, most students are more engaged…I think they are usually like more apt to listen and do the work that goes into it. Especially like for my students of color. If we're talking about people of color, like we analyzed a primary source, it was an interview with Cesar Chavez about his family's life during the Depression. And I'm like, usually any stories that we tell about the Depression, they're like, "Oh like why? Like, why are you making me read this? It's so sad." But quite a few kids like actually read it and like interacted with it. Like they analyzed the source, they answered the questions, they answered them correctly…And it probably changed the way that they thought about how our government should work for us.

Instead of introducing unknown voices or experiences like Tracy and Seth did in world history, Melissa showed that using known or familiar voices in a different way encouraged students to relate to historical events as well as increasing their motivation to complete the academic work. These choices about content show that these teachers were aware that they can use content to foster multiple goals, including representation. All three participants also spoke to the impact of current events on their content choices, and that will be addressed in a later section.

50

Content is only one place where these teachers spoke of making curricular choices informed by social justice aims. They also described their student learning objectives in terms of critical thinking and academic skills through a lens of social justice. They talked about not only what knowledge they wanted students to obtain but what thinking, reading, and writing skills they hoped to build. As a middle school teacher, Seth spoke the most directly to the need to develop academic writing skills that would support students in future years. "The content is important in some such way, but then also if they're struggling to write a thesis statement of a topic sentence, maybe it is also or equally important to slow down and keep working on that." There is a tension present between content and skills for many social studies teachers, but he asserted that they must be balanced for students' long-term success. He also spoke to the importance of writing as an academic skill, but went on to connect access to these skills as part of a larger social justice issue as well. "I often had a blind spot of like, I could be working more on skills or things like that … That is also important in terms of social justice or equity or something along those lines."

As previously mentioned, the tradeoff between content and skills factors into curricular choices as well. Melissa explained that she has felt more free to make different choices, "We've been able to shift away from that [getting through material] because social studies isn't like a blanket part of testing anymore." Without the pressure of a content-standard test, Melissa feels able to make more choices about not only what but how to teach. The use of more complex sources can increase students' content understanding but can be time-consuming, and this often collides with that pressure to cover context. Utilizing primary sources is one curricular strategy that teachers use to develop critical thinking and reading skills students may not work on in other classes or disciplines. Choosing to have students engage in primary sources is challenging in

51

terms of both content and literacy. Seth recognized that pressure he felt to use primary sources

needed to be tempered with the realities of middle school.

> I have to remind myself, I don't think I read any of these things when I was in middle
> school. So, it's still, it's okay. Especially if it means that they understand more. If I cut
> this Frederick Douglass thing in half, but they actually can understand it afterwards and
> it's probably better."

Tracy credited her work with the UC Davis History Project as influencing her teaching: "One of

the big things working with the UC Davis History Project was really focusing on getting primary

source material into the kids' hands … So that I think shifted a lot of the way that I teach…" All

the participants in this study have worked with the UC Davis History Project, so this shared

experience may have shaped this shared perspective.

Melissa and Tracy also spoke directly to the skills social studies teachers and classes

should be supporting to help foster an informed citizenry. They both specifically saw critical

thinking about sources as a skill they could develop as history teachers. Tracy cited media

consumership specifically as something she tried to support: "I think that understanding media

influence and bias and how to be savvy media consumers is an invaluable citizen skill,

citizenship skill." Understanding and identifying bias as a necessary skill for students was also a

goal for Melissa as part of an overall effort to support students' development to make meaningful

change,

> … getting students to like, A, figure out how to think, not what to think, but how to think.
> And then from there, how to take action. So how to analyze, how to read sources, how to
> see bias in their sources, how to look at situations. And then, how to best like move
> forward from there.

The content becomes a vehicle for the skills, both of which ultimately lead to students being able

to participate in democracy and take informed action.

The interview data implies that the optimum result of curricular choices regarding both content and critical thinking development is an active citizenry. This is in line with the participant's definitions of educational social justice that emphasized working towards systemic changes. In both their survey responses and interviews, it was embedded that these history teachers viewed their students as future citizens who would apply their knowledge of history and critical thinking skills and take action. To this end, Tracy used the term "agency" to describe what she wanted students to see in historical actors as well as in themselves. She stated her goals for her students as

> I want them to be empathetic, critical thinkers and to have a sense of agency and to see injustice and then know that there are things that they can do about it, and also to see injustices and then to ask that question of okay, so now what, instead of being more passive participants in this world.

This idea of agency means that she wanted her students to feel like they have the ability to act and make changes. Placing a sense of agency on the same level as critical thinking and empathy as a learning objective demonstrated her belief that students should leave her class ready to act, to overcome being "passive participants" and challenge injustices. Melissa used the term "empower" instead as what she hoped her students felt about their own education. "I mean, I think that's the real crux of it is like, how can we shift so that they feel empowered to be part of their own education?" Teaching to create students who act aligns with the expectations teacher leaders have of themselves as leaders for social justice. Valuing action or work is a consistent belief about leading for social justice. These participants believed not only that they should be active participants and contributors to social justice work but that their students should feel able to do the same. Part of their job, as they defined it, was imparting their students the ability to act and the belief that they should.

It is interesting that none of the participants specifically cited culturally relevant pedagogy as so much of their thinking around curriculum and instruction reflect so much of the work and theories of Gloria Ladson-Billings. Much of what they discussed in terms of choosing content that reflects the diversity of their students, maintaining high academic expectations for all students, valuing cultural competency and perspective, and fostering critical thinking about systems of power and oppression directly aligns with tenets and priorities of culturally relevant pedagogy. It can be assumed that they would agree with Ladson-Billings' well-known statement, "But that's just good teaching," as well as demonstrating conscious, deliberate decision-making that also aligns with the deeper aims of CRP to engage and promote success in traditionally marginalized students and families.

Contrary to previous research that has suggested that teachers are not equally implementing all tenets of CRP (Morrison et al, 2008; Young, 2010) these particular teachers showed a commitment to content and instruction that requires students to think critically about the nature of power and inequity as part of historical analysis. They used current events, such as the murders of Brianna Taylor and George Floyd, and moments of national crisis like January 6th, 2021 to illuminate historical patterns. The participants in this study each spoke of ongoing self-reflection both as individuals and as it related directly to their teaching (Howard, 2003; Sleeter, 2001; Utt & Tochluk, 2020). They also showed the appropriate dispositions that research suggests are necessary for teachers to be effective teachers for social justice (Villegas, 2007; Warren, 2018).

Theme 2: Teachers Are Negotiating Competing Political Climates

I mean, we're not blind to the political climate

—Melissa

Part of the reason why social studies classes are required is to help students understand the world around them and, as previously discussed, prepare them to be informed citizens. The teachers in this study assumed an additional responsibility to prepare students to be not only informed but also participatory citizens with a sense of agency to create change. As Melissa's quote above attests, teachers like the three participants don't operate in a vacuum and are aware that they are operating within and sometimes against a larger social and political context. The events of the nation at large put an added weight on their decisions in the classroom. As Tracey described it, "There's just an increased intensity in the classroom." Part of this intensity comes from unfolding events and is compounded by divided political beliefs about what these events mean and how they should be handled. In their interviews, all three participants spoke directly to critical events that forced them to navigate competing political positions and often local community cultures that conflict with larger national trends.

Ongoing events of the last several years have forced issues to the foreground and given teachers concerned with social justice topical material with which to engage students. Additionally, as expressed in their interviews, they have fueled some teachers' beliefs that their instruction must be responsive and reflective of these crucial moments as they occur. The Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville in 2017, the killings of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor by the police in 2020, and the January 6 insurrection at the Capitol were specific events that seemed to galvanize the participants in their teaching. Melissa expressed the concern and responsibility she felt in providing students a place to discuss and process these events: "I think if you turn a blind eye to that and you don't discuss those events, then you're not doing your students justice, to give them a voice and place to talk." She went on to later say that if social studies teachers were not providing this space, students likely did not have another place to process or talk about

these types of events. Along those same lines, Tracy spoke to the need to provide ongoing opportunities as events continue to evolve and change. As events such as the January 6 insurrection continue to influence or impact the nation, teachers like Tracy would argue they must guide students to follow those developments. "So that's one example, talking my students through the insurrection as it was happening on January 6th past year and then trying to help them make sense of the unfolding developments through the rest of the year." This demonstrates that for teachers motivated by educational social justice, acknowledging and addressing events that shape the political climate is one way in which they are able to provide students opportunities to learn.

The election of 2016 and the presidency of Donald Trump were cited by all three teachers as events that had a significant impact on their teaching and their students. The political rhetoric, anti-immigrant policies, and misinformation caused distress for many students, and all three teachers spoke of how they grappled with the Trump election and subsequent presidency. Tracy described,

> During the 4 years of the Trump presidency, so many students just didn't feel safe, students were crying. And I had all my students write down their feelings after the announcement of the 2016 election and I just read them in class, out loud anonymously. And it was just so many students feeling like I don't even feel safe in school. I don't feel safe anywhere in my country right now.

When students are emotional and feeling threatened, some teachers believe it is difficult if not impossible to just continue teaching as if nothing is happening. This is particularly true in a social studies class, where the content requires studying elections and public policy and societal changes. As Seth pointed out, the Trump years made politics much more salient and immediate for many of his students: "More students were paying attention to politics because…they were afraid he was going to deport their mom." This suggests that these teachers felt it was necessary

56

to use their classrooms as a place where students could process and make sense of how the election of 2016 would impact them personally.

In addition to attending to the very personal impact of Trump's presidency, Seth also spoke to feeling like it was particularly valuable and relevant to use the present as a means to making historical connections:

> Like having Donald Trump as president was such a constant series of teachable moments because he was always saying something racist about immigrants or talking about elections being stolen, and you could just immediately be like, here's a cartoon of Irish immigrants wearing whiskey barrels running away with the ballot box. Here's a tweet of Donald Trump saying that thousands of illegals voted.

Although anything that provides a "constant series of teachable moments" might seem like something teachers would welcome, it was not without challenges or risks about how to handle those events for the teachers interviewed. Obviously, despite some students feeling threatened by the Trump presidency and the beliefs he extolled, others felt differently, and these conflicting perspectives were a throughline in the interviews. Referring to the end of the Trump presidency and trying to discuss his election and subsequent defeat, Seth spoke directly to this, saying, "It has become a political move for a teacher to say all these things are made up." For Seth or others who teach in conservative communities, this creates an ongoing tension for teachers who want to provide accurate instruction and space on current political events through a lens of social justice but also need to remain mindful of community standards or culture.

Events such as the racial reckoning that is continuing to occur in the wake of police killing George Floyd, a Black man, in the summer of 2020 have also pushed schools and districts to directly respond. Not only did participants speak to how they personally grappled with how to address it in their classrooms, but they pointed to it as a seminal moment in social justice efforts within their school or district. Seth spoke at length about what he saw in his district in 2020:

57

… there was a big uproar after George Floyd over the summer because a student at the high school started tweeting out different videos of white kids from the high school saying different racist things. And it became a huge thing … And then the superintendent said, "This is terrible. We're going to have a task force."

In this sense the district was not only responding to national events but was forced to look inward at racial attitudes within its own community. Implied in Seth's comment is that what is occurring in the community may be unsettling or even shocking to some. However, these three teachers seemed to be extremely aware of the attitudes of the community in which they are teaching and concerned that their commitment to social justice teaching and even national movements to that end would not be accepted, let alone welcomed. In contrast to his district's newfound drive to address racism, Seth describes where he teaches as "a town…where there are a lot of Trump flags and all the other paraphernalia, by which I mean Confederate flags." So although teachers like Seth may be willing to address questions of systemic oppression or racism in class, even with the support of the district, they still need to navigate a community that does not agree that racism is a problem.

This tension present in the need for social studies teachers to address ongoing social issues within a community whose dominant political beliefs oppose those conversations complicates teaching decisions for these teachers. As implied in both of Seth's quotes above, although he disagreed with it, he could not ignore the fact that his community is, in his own words, "a fairly conservative town." Melissa discussed that as well in terms of student engagement in those issues: "But a lot of my white conservative kids don't want to engage in those conversations in class. And that's different than it was before. Some have been emboldened, but some still want to fly under the radar." This shows that even when teachers like Melissa are trying to address potentially controversial social topics, many of the very students she hopes to engage are opting out. When I asked her how she handled those situations, she

answered frankly, "Not very well." It is yet another factor these teachers weigh when they are teaching. Curricular choices are not immune from cultural or political forces on all sides of the political spectrum from outside the classroom.

Tracy shared a very specific example that embodies this tension when community cultural values seem to politicize school operations. As she was speaking about school-wide efforts to focus on equity, she pointed to the challenge of trying to change campus culture within a community with opposing views. She gave an example of a public service seemingly supporting a protest against school COVID policies:

> And a lot of it is because how do you change the culture in the community? We had these huge protests at our site over masks the last week right before the break … and our fire trucks would go by and honk for them and then loop around and come back again…The district office caught it on film so they could be like, hmm, fire department.

Although this was about COVID, which has been widely politicized nationally, it was also representative of local opposition to larger trends or forces to make schools more equitable or accessible places. Her question was not a rhetorical one in this sense, but truly the one that these teachers seemed to be working to answer for themselves within their work for social justice: How do you change the culture in the community that does not support educational social justice?

Teaching is inherently political (Nieto, 2006). The teaching of history requires that students and teachers grapple with the political conflicts and debates of earlier times. However, as discussed by the participants, teaching social studies since 2016 has become particularly fraught as events outside the classroom crash ever more frequently into daily lessons. The pinpointing of the election of Donald Trump in 2016 as a pivotal moment is reflected in recent research, even though the impact and consequences of that election, and subsequently 2020, continue to unfold. Students and teachers alike have reported heightened levels of anxiety in

school around issues such as immigration, race, and identity during the era of Trump (Rogers et al., 2017).

Furthermore, because these teachers were situated in communities that do not universally embrace or support many elements of social justice content, they also had to think about local demands and expectations as they relate to what and how they teach. In this, teachers have some agency about making the choices that align with their own teaching objectives, but are not confident that their actions will be supported, which acts as a limit on their ability to act (Priestley et al., 2015). Despite this, or perhaps because of it, researchers have identified ways that teachers use local conditions to maximize their ability to teach with social justice objectives (Dover, 2013).

Theme 3: It Is Not Easy on Teachers

I just feel like there is a higher emotional toll.

—Tracy

All the participants in this study were chosen because they had demonstrated a belief in teaching history in ways that were representative of multiple perspectives, valued the inclusion of historically marginalized communities, and fostered the kind of critical thinking and engagement that encourages civic participation. The three selected for interviews shared interesting and provocative views on the questions of educational social justice and teacher leadership. However, all of this was also taking place during an unprecedented period in public education in which teachers were under tremendous stress as well as scrutiny. These demands and stressors emerged as an undercurrent throughout the interviews as key factors and gave shape to how teacher leaders were experiencing teaching at this time. They spoke of high levels of uncertainty leading them to doubt and question their own decisions as well as exhaustion and

burnout among their colleagues, all of which make it harder to enact changes towards greater social justice.

Despite serving as leaders in various capacities, all three interviewees expressed uncertainty about how much support or backing they would have if they were questioned about their teaching. Melissa discussed it most directly, frequently stating, "I don't know what happens" in regards to a serious or organized effort against teaching controversial issues or forcing uncomfortable discussions surrounding race. She elaborated on her doubts, saying, "I don't know what happens when I get accused of teaching CRT [critical race theory] and how much backup am I going to have?" She also gave a specific example of a family that voiced opposition to her course syllabus. She was able to deal directly with the parent and there were no future problems in this case, but, "I definitely didn't know what would happen if I had to take it to somebody else." This uncertainty of support adds to the doubt or self-questioning that these teachers have as they make curricular choices.

Seth reflected that self-doubt in the questions he asked himself about how much to confront questions of race and social justice directly. "I'm constantly wondering, should I be more direct about any of these topics?" Working with middle school students may present an additional consideration, but he repeated his concerns about "how much" or "how far" he should be pushing to include conversations about systemic oppression or racism. This implies that if he had a more clear or well-established idea of whether or not he would be supported by administration or the district, he would be more confident pursuing certain topics. Much like with Melissa, this level of doubt possibly hindered his ability to fully commit to the curricular choices he felt aligned with social justice aims.

61

Working with a high level of uncertainty or doubt was a source of additional stress to Melissa and Seth during a time of already high pressure on teachers. Part of what characterizes the teachers' experiences in this moment is exhaustion and burnout. Tracy said, "I am definitely feeling the burnout." She also spoke of several colleagues who were leaving teaching and the specific stress on history teachers, particularly teachers of color.

> I feel like I know all teachers have had just a real struggle these past couple of years, and of course I talked to more history teachers than others, but teachers of color in particular or social studies teachers, I just feel there's a much higher emotional toll.

The idea that teaching social studies during this time carries a higher emotional toll suggests that teaching for social justice, as noted by Melissa, needs greater support and that backing or support should be part of the campus culture.

These statements about burnout and fatigue from uncertainty call into question the sustainability of individual teachers, or even departments, shouldering the responsibility for efforts towards greater social justice. It is possible that social studies teachers are simply too overwhelmed and undersupported to make the kind of changes and efforts necessary to proliferate meaningful change. The three interviewees referenced colleagues who weren't willing or interested in changing how they taught, and this suggested that perhaps social justice or equity was in danger of being yet another task they needed to take on. Melissa made it plain in saying she saw some of the disinterest in teaching ethnic studies as exhaustion, not true opposition: "Honestly think it's more like, you're making me do more work and not outright hostility to like engaging students about topics of race." The lived experience of teachers engaged in the work of transforming schools to more inclusive and accessible places cannot be viewed as a burden but rather an opportunity if it is to be successful.

Teacher exhaustion and burnout have been greatly increased by the impact of COVID on schools and teaching (Pressley, 2021), and teaching for social justice presents its own stressors

on teachers (Navarro, 2018). The participants echoed what research has shown regarding the need for teachers to be supported in social justice work (Navarro, 2018). These participants, although highly motivated to teaching that centers social justice objectives and committed to the praxis of culturally relevant pedagogy, were not immune to the weight and stress of such work. This was particularly true as they anticipated resistance from students, families, and colleagues. This reflects research that suggests that anticipation of resistance should be part of the strategic planning leaders include as social justice leaders. Resistance to resistance is to be expected, and in order to survive under those circumstances, successful social justice leaders in education must have ways in which they can sustain themselves and their work (Theoharis, 2007). These teachers reaffirmed the toll it can take and the need for educators with social justice goals to have support to sustain their work.

Teacher Leadership for Educational Social Justice: Supports and Challenges

The experience of teachers trying to lead for greater educational social justice is a personal but not a private one. Teachers operate in a public school, which by definition and design is an institution situated in and supported by a community. Teachers are in the center of multiple layers, or systems, that can serve to both support and hinder their efforts to lead towards social justice goals in their teaching. I used Bronfenbrenner's (1976) theory of ecological systems as a lens of analysis in order to answer the second and third research questions. At each systems level, there are areas of support and hindrance to teacher lead social justice. This section is organized by system in order to identify how each layer provides sources of support to teachers as well as the barriers that make the work more challenging.

Home Life and Classroom

As described in their vignettes, participants chose teaching as a profession for a variety of reasons. And it was clear that each one consciously chose teaching, social studies teaching specifically, rather than just falling into it. Seth and Melissa both stated a love of history as a motivation for their teaching. This suggests that teachers are bringing a personal affinity to their work into the classroom, which could serve as a driving force in their efforts towards social justice teaching. A personal belief system may sustain teacher leaders in their teaching, believing that they are doing something important and worthy.

When discussing what it is like to approach topics of race and systemic oppression, participants described these conversations as difficult or uncomfortable. Melissa and Seth, in particular, talked about their own doubts as to how far they should push these topics. This self-doubt or, as Melissa described it, "severe discomfort in causing discomfort in others," can be seen as a barrier within the classroom or immediate setting to encouraging or fostering educational social justice. Within this microsystem of the classroom, the teachers' personal tolerances with their students' unease to confront potentially challenging topics could hinder overall efforts at social justice efforts. In this sense it is a personal dilemma or internal conflict for teachers like the ones interviewed. Although they have a strong personal commitment and belief in using the classroom as a site for social justice teaching, they also struggle with hesitancy to create discomfort within this setting.

Interaction With Colleagues and Students

Collaboration was a concept frequently cited throughout the data for this study. Being collaborative or working in collaboration with colleagues was one of the characteristics that helped define a teacher leader, based on the responses from the surveys. More specifically,

during the interviews, participants discussed working within their department as a place where ideas and goals about curriculum were being put into practice. In this sense, departments were the important site of interaction with colleagues or peers and as such, were the mesosystem for the purpose of analysis. Department collaboration was discussed as a process in which teachers were able to make progress aligning curriculum to be more inclusive and culturally responsive, but also where individual colleagues were able to avoid implementing that same curriculum.

Departments were a potential source of progress in terms of changes to curriculum according to Melissa and Tracy. Melissa described work within her department as "making sure our courses are like relatively aligned…we don't have to be lockstep, but we have to do similar major assignments and that we're close-ish together." This shows that because there is a shared goal of having all classes teach approximately the same content using similar assignments, teachers like Melissa feel they are able to influence curriculum to shift across the campus, not just in their individual classes. Tracy shared a similar goal for her department work, although it didn't always achieve as much as she would like. She said that she had been "trying to get to our department to start looking at our materials and having those conversations too like, okay well, what can we do to decolonize world history education as a whole department?" But she went on later to also lament that not enough department time was going to that kind of collaboration and that administration could better support social justice teaching by making it a priority for departments. She said a priority should be

> … department meetings where teachers can actually examine their curriculum and whatever and look for bias, inclusivity, where opportunities where we can decolonize our curriculum or where we can make sure that the images we have in our slideshows, the whatever, are more representative of our students to make that like we want this to be your focus during department meeting where you actually are paid to be together and you have this time slot there to be together. Instead of it only being about common formative assessments and minimizing Ds and Fs…

65

These comments illustrate that interacting with colleagues is necessary to foster change, particularly in curriculum.

Departments are also a part of the leadership structure of most schools and provide a place for formal or nominal leadership roles for teachers. So although department meetings are the setting in which collaborative work among peers can occur, there is also an opportunity for teachers to lead as department chair. This presents an official role for teachers to direct or guide the direction of work, particularly around curriculum, towards inclusion, representation, and recentering the narrative. The role of department chair or lead holds a lot of potential for social justice leadership; however, the teachers interviewed suggested the limitations on authority undermine the ability to enact department-wide changes. As previously discussed, Tracy explained how other demands on department meeting time by administration took away focus from working to change curriculum or content. She specifically mentioned discussions about grades as taking precedence over deeper conversation about decolonizing and diversifying what was taught. Melissa talked about alignment of assignments and assessments, but didn't specifically say it was for the purpose of social justice. Implied in both their descriptions is that department collaboration is often more about the mechanics of aligning curriculum than interrogating the content itself.

The larger limitation on department chairs, according to Seth, was lack of accountability from the rest of the teachers to adopt shared curriculum or instruction goals, particularly when it came to content. Like Melissa and Tracy, he saw the potential of department-wide collaboration to share curriculum and assignments, but acknowledged that participation was largely optional. In describing his department, and role as department chair, he said,

> … seventh grade, we're largely actually on the same page, and we're using each other's stuff. But that's just because we wanted to. And eighth grade, which does have all the

teachers who have been here for more than a decade, does their own thing. And it doesn't really matter how many times I come over and I'm like, "Here's this cool thing I made, are you interested?" Right? I don't have any power over them. And I don't see how you have a productive relationship by trying to obligate anybody to do something different, especially when you are supposed to be just coworkers or coequal.

His final statement about being "just coworkers or coequal" defined why departments are a key part of the mesosystem for teachers as well as why this interaction or interplay among peers relies on all participants to opt in for it to be a site of any change. Department chairs are leaders in name and are expected to run or facilitate meetings but do not have the autonomy to set the agenda or objectives of each meeting, nor can they hold their colleagues accountable. When it comes to significant changes to curriculum, as Seth points out, each teacher is still an independent operator without formal obligation to the agreements of the department. As Seth put it, "Everybody kind of just does their own thing, and that is the end."

Department collaboration among colleagues is only one of the interactions teacher leaders engage in within the mesosystems of schools. Teacher–student interactions and exchanges are another critical and powerful source of support for teacher leaders for social justice. Students are products of the local community and are subject to navigating the same cultural and political tensions as teachers, yet are also independent actors inside a campus community. This is especially true at the high school level, and Melissa and Tracy, as high school teachers, shared how students themselves supported and often fueled social justice and equity work. Tracy and Melissa have both served as advisors for student-led Gay-Straight Alliance or LGBTQ+ clubs at school, supporting students engaged in their own efforts to organize and represent diverse students. Tracy mentioned that in addition to district and teacher-led groups, "I have a group of students who are trying to create a student equity club," demonstrating a student commitment to studying and fostering systemic inequity within the school. Students advocating for greater equity within their own schools may look towards

teachers as both leaders and allies in these efforts. Students may support and motivate teacher leaders in their social justice efforts as well as seeking support for their own work. This is a potentially productive interplay and cooperation within the mesosystem to foster change for both students and teachers.

Policies at the Campus, District, and State Levels

How the three teacher leaders interviewed navigated the political beliefs of the communities in which they teach was a principal characteristic of their experiences working to teach through a lens of social justice. This includes the policies created that either reflect or challenge those community standards and are contained within the exosystem. These concrete social structures are sometimes the target of social justice work cited by participants, such as dress codes. In other cases, they bolster and affirm a school or district's commitment to inclusion, such as the FAIR Act or the creation of ethnic studies as a graduation requirement. And yet there were still questions or doubts about to what extent administrators or district leaders would uphold these types of policies in the case of protest or complaints from parents when directed at teachers.

One problematic campus-level policy that both Tracy and Seth noted was the dress code. Traditionally, policies dictating what students could or could not wear to school have been justified in the name of safety and appropriateness. In recent years, many schools have reconsidered their dress codes in light of protests from students, families, and staff that point to unequal or unfair enforcement. The rules themselves, as well as the interpretation and enforcement of traditional rules about dress, have been challenged as sexist, racist, and resulting in reinforcing more harsh punishments for certain historically marginalized students. All that

said, Tracy specifically mentioned efforts to change her school's dress code as an early success for greater gender equity.

> I think there's been a greater examination of our policies around dress code. Maybe 10 years ago, we had "Girls, you're supposed to wear this color graduation. Boys are supposed to wear this color." And there's nothing else, the total binary. And so that's changed over time.

Here, she explained that because of a greater focus or awareness of systemic inequities that reinforce a gender binary, long-held policies had been reconsidered and changed. Tracy pointed to eliminating gender-based colors for graduation as a place where school policy had been changed to better align with the goals of educational social justice. Conversely, in Seth's description, there was an awareness that aspects of dress code enforcement were problematic and did not support equity efforts, but had not yet been corrected or changed.

> I mean the dress code doesn't help because it, of course is largely enforced selectively and towards girls in terms of … but I think, if there's any other sort of regulation kind of things, I think that in general, all laws everywhere, any of the school rules are enforced selectively… Not necessarily towards any particular ethnic minority or anything like that, but there's definitely the possibility of that. And it just really depends on the teacher.

In his case, he implied that there was an understanding that the policy itself was not in line with efforts to eliminate inequitable disciplinary outcomes. However, because enforcement was in the hands of teachers, uneven and disparate punishment remained. In both cases, increased equity only comes when the policy itself is changed for the entire school.

The importance of policy as a means to support social justice work was illustrated in examples from Tracy and Melissa. In both of these situations, district and state policies not only supported but required more diverse, inclusive, and representative content. In 2012, the state of California enacted SB 48, which amended the California Education Code to include LGBTQ people and people with disabilities to the list of groups that must be represented in history and social science textbooks. Known as the FAIR Act, it requires "Fair, Accurate, Inclusive and

69

Respectful" teaching of the histories and stories of these two previously misrepresented or excluded groups. The contributions of these groups to the political, social, and economic development of the state and the nation must be included in history and social studies curriculum. In practice, for many teachers who strive to challenge negative stereotypes against LGBTQ people, it has become a source of legitimacy for teaching about the existence and experiences of LGBTQ people. Tracy spoke about the FAIR Act not only as giving individual teachers cover for including lessons about sexual orientation or gender identity in history, but as justification for schools to require students participate in these lessons.

> If I look back towards when the FAIR Act had passed, but it was still not super well known. There were teachers that were letting students opt out of learning about gay rights movement because parents didn't want their kids learning about that on that day or something. And that certainly has been made clear by administrators that that's unacceptable.

This is a clear and specific example of policy not only endorsing but pushing social justice efforts beyond what the community may be prepared to support. It highlights the importance of such policies and the enforcement of them by school leadership to allow teachers to use their curriculum towards social justice aims.

Melissa spoke to her district's early adoption of ethnic studies as a graduation requirement as an illustration of using policy to move forward with social justice teaching. California is the first state in the country that will require all students to complete a semester-long course in ethnic studies to graduate from high school. The state mandate will apply to the graduating class of 2029–2030, but high schools must start offering a course by the 2025–2026 school year. The addition of ethnic studies as a graduation requirement has been seen as an achievement for educators advocating for social studies curriculum to be more representative of the experiences of a diverse student population. It has also, however, become a target for conservative activists who oppose changes to the dominant narrative of American

70

exceptionalism. In Melissa's case, she saw her district's early adoption of ethnic studies as a requirement as using policy to make positive changes to curriculum. Perhaps of even more importance, she described how the district had created and required training for teachers to be prepared to teach the course, ahead of the state mandated deadline.

> I think we're moving in the right direction. And our district's been really supportive with that. They brought in the training, they set up the ethnic studies requirement starting next year. It's like, you actually have to fulfill it in order to graduate, which is earlier than some places. And they were moving in this direction before the state moved in that direction. So I was pretty pleased with that.

Like Tracy, Melissa saw the implementation of statewide policy at her local level as progress towards and systemic support of social justice objectives. This aligns with how they spoke of the importance of curricular choices as a means to social justice as well.

Right Here, Right Now

As much as policies can dictate changes towards greater representation and present a commitment to undoing inequitable practices, they still operate within overarching institutions and organizational principles of the larger society and culture. Prevailing cultural, political, and economic forces help shape the creation of policy, but those same forces also challenge and complicate the implementation of systemic changes. The ways in which those forces and attitudes are conveyed also play an important role in how changes are made and perceived. This macrosystem of national forces, as communicated through the media and acted upon within the local community, provides significant challenges to social justice work, according to the teachers in this survey. If nothing else, it creates an uncertainty or fear of opposition that creates hesitation among teacher leaders. This anticipation of opposition is a deterrent and seems to undermine action, even by those who strongly support teaching through the lens of social justice. The chronosystem, or importance of time and timing as a factor for all of these forces, is critical

71

to understanding the impact of the macrosystem. All of these beliefs about institutions are time sensitive, and the national climate at a given point in time can magnify or diminish opposition.

The three teachers interviewed all made reference to conservative beliefs held by families within their teaching communities. This provided the local tension they navigated in their immediate settings. Beyond that, though, they also spoke to the larger national conversations around race, social justice, and teachers that hangs over more localized decisions. In Melissa's case, this created a level of fear or insecurity surrounding decisions about curriculum that have already been made in her district. Although there are policies in place, she saw national debate about CRT as creating additional scrutiny. "So, I'm hoping that I have backup because it's in the Ed code, it's in our district policy, it's in all of those places. But I don't know what happens when I get accused of teaching CRT." She later acknowledged that because the CRT debate was not yet happening when her district enacted ethnic studies, they might have been able to take actions without opposition that they would not be able to today.

> And honestly, since this went into board policy before 2020, I think that if this was being newly passed in 2022, we probably would get feedback right now from the anti-CRT groups. But since it's already our policy, it's already passed, it's already happening … So I think it's those new policies that are going into place now, where people are running into issues.

Nevertheless, the potential for attacks motivated by this current national debate still haunted Melissa and caused her to doubt her security.

> I just always worry about like, is my job going to be OK? I've never had a formal complaint against me, but I'm worried about like, what would happen if that was a thing? Because seeing that happen in other places and the consequences of that [losing your job] …

As previously mentioned, this doubt sometimes leads to individual teacher hesitancy, as described by these participants, but can potentially have a cooling effect on efforts put in place by policy overall.

This insecurity or underlying fear of opposition connected to national debates is also felt collectively as teachers collaborate for equity. Tracy spoke to the anticipation of opposition experienced as part of her district's equity team.

> So we created an equity statement, and there was concern that this was going to be a big deal and that there was going to be a lot of resistance about making an equity statement. In the end, I don't know whether those fears were just over concern or something. Nobody protested the equity statement of anything.

There was no real or tangible opposition; however; the fear of it affected the work of the committee, according to Tracy. This demonstrates that teachers leading and participating in work that leads to new policies or practices are very aware that strong protest and opposition is possible. What they see or read in the media and hear about in other parts of the country factors in as they decide how to proceed. This suggests that consciousness of the macrosystem slows the process or ambition of attempts to enact changes to support social justice teaching.

The factor of timing in whether or not change occurs is implied in both Melissa and Tracy's statements. Seth brought it up directly, demonstrating that all the other layers and systems that determine change are occurring in a specific place in time. Critical events, such as the death of George Floyd, that spur the examination of practices also create a sense of urgency, or timeliness, within a school community. As previously quoted, Seth described the uproar following racist social media posts by high school students during the summer of 2020 and his district's responses to it. He then went on to talk about how the commitment to action shifted as time passed.

> There's some sort of plan … They got a bunch of parents that slowly dwindled, because it's been two years almost now … I was a little surprised at how slowly everything happened, even though my expectation was that … maybe something will come of this.

He sensed that once the moment had passed, the momentum would slow, yet he remained hopeful that something lasting would occur. This speaks to the power of the chronosystem and

the need for timing and time to be considered as an essential part of sustained social justice work. A particular event can shift conditions in such a way that spurs change forward and supports progress. Conversely, the loss of momentum or interest over a prolonged period of time can delay the implementation of changes supporting social justice.

Revisiting Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory

There is a gap between the conceptualization of social justice and the changes that must be made in order to achieve the goals of social justice, particularly in schools (Berkovich, 2014). By connecting the factors that impact work towards social justice to the nested systems in which students and teachers operate, it is possible to identify places of leverage where focused efforts could have the greatest impact on overall equity and access.

Teachers' home lives, personal interests, and experiences within the microsystem provide motivation and intrinsic motivation. It is this sphere of the microsystem that teachers who want to lead for social justice that seems to drive teachers like the ones in this study. It is also a place in which teachers can sustain themselves in order to maintain the energy to continue the work of social justice. One of the challenges for educators who strive to lead for social justice is exhaustion (Theoharis, 2007), and recognizing the microsystem is one way to support teachers.

Teachers bring these microsystem experiences into their professional settings and interactions with colleagues and students, who in turn come from their own microsystems. This interplay or interaction among microsystems creates the mesosystem (Leonard, 2011). The participants in this study spoke a great deal about the role content-area departments play as collaboration with their colleagues. Collaboration presents a great opportunity to develop curriculum and praxis that support social justice teaching as well as providing moral support to teachers who participate (Navarro, 2018). However, in their experiences of collaboration, the

74

participants in this study also spoke to the limits of department collaboration to enact ambitious, department-wide changes. This is consistent with what researchers have found in that the very nature of egalitarianism among teachers makes it more difficult to hold colleagues accountable to agreements among teachers that do not come as directives from administration or formal leadership (Wenner & Campbell, 2017; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). The interaction of teachers and equity-minded students presents the mesosystem as a source of support for social justice objectives. This suggests that collegial collaboration is just one of the factors in the mesosystem that can be leveraged to create change. Teachers and students cocreating culturally relevant curriculum or more inclusive practices and policies is an area for future social justice research.

When collaboration is successful, the focus of what should change is not only curriculum or pedagogy, but often the policies that can limit equity and inclusion. District policies, the state education code, and the unique political conditions within the community are all part of the exosystem in which teachers operate. The exosystem is working to shift actions generated within the mesosystem to create greater inclusion and equity for all students. According to Bronfenbrenner (1976), understanding the context outside of the immediate setting for students and teachers is a necessary component to understand their experience. The focus on policies and the larger social context allows a broader view of social justice effort and leadership (Berkovich, 2014).

Two key findings of this study are that the teachers interviewed were impacted by national events and how those events were presented by the media and that those events specifically occurring from 2016 to the present created a sense of urgency for them. Their teaching decisions and social justice orientation did not occur in a vacuum. The macrosystem, or social, economic, and political institutions of society at large, creates the conditions or events to

which these teachers applied their beliefs about social justice teaching (Berkovich, 2014), and the chronosystem or the importance of time creates an urgency and immediacy to their work (Leonard, 2011). They both provide sparks to begin or continue with social justice work, and these opportunities or openings are valuable as momentum for teachers wishing to lead for social justice.

Through analysis of responses about educational social justice, teacher leadership, and identifying as social justice advocates, a nuanced definition of teachers leading for social justice begins to emerge. Teacher leadership for social justice has two interrelated parts. The first part relies on external roles and the perceptions of others, and the second is an internal process of personal goal setting and growth. Both are linked and operationalized by actions and behaviors by the individual teacher. This conception of teacher leadership encompasses the expectations or demands placed on an individual teacher by others, as well as by themselves and the ways in which they choose to act upon their commitment to social justice.

The external, visible side of teacher leadership for social justice is the characteristics that demonstrate a commitment to serving others and the overall community. Such a teacher would be described as helpful and collaborative by their colleagues. They would mentor newer teachers and serve as a role model for all. They would inspire others to grow and become better in their individual practice. These external characteristics as perceived by others, irrespective of titled position, allow for a type of informal leadership (Frost & Harris, 2003) in which teachers lead through their relationship and engagement with colleagues and the campus community. This lateral interaction places the site of potential change in the mesosystem, allowing teachers to bring their personal experiences and strengths into their teaching settings. This suggests the

potential for impacting others towards social justice goals is higher under conditions where informal, relationship based mentoring flourishes and is the norm.

The internal element of teacher leadership for social justice is determined by an individual's self-identification. These are traits or characteristics that the individual teacher, much like the participants of this study, self-assess and for which they hold themselves accountable. These teachers are conscious of systemic flaws that continue to contribute to inequity and injustice. They understand the history and context of marginalization and discrimination, particularly against students of color. They are driven by their values of representation, inclusion, and change. They remain lifelong learners who continue to grow and learn. This side of teacher leadership is in line with research that shows even teachers who aspire to lead believe in privacy and autonomy of the individual teacher as well as equality among colleagues (Smylie & Denny, 1990). Whereas the external, outer profesional qualities express themselves most clearly in the mesosystem, the internal qualities operate at the level of the microsystem, or the immediate setting in which they work.

The internal and external characteristics are operationalized through actions taken by the teacher leader, thus creating tangible changes towards education social justice. These actions include advocacy on behalf of marginalized students and families and deliberate curricular choices that increase inclusion, representation, and accuracy. Less specifically, this is described as the "work" of social justice, where interactions and personal beliefs are translated into shifts in policy and practices. The shifts in policy and practices result in changes to the exosystem in which teachers and schools operate. Furthermore, in a broader context, these shifts would also occur in the macrosystem, changing the overall social, cultural, and political conditions in which schools are situated. This is also where the participants of this study tended to judge themselves

as falling short in their own minds of being social justice advocates. This suggests that although a teacher may possess intrinsic motivation and commitment to social justice ideals and be viewed by their peers as a leader, for some teachers, the identity as teacher leader is not fully obtained without actions or behaviors that result in changes to policy or wider social conditions. It is arguable that this is a high bar for teachers to need to clear to impact meaningful change, and perhaps social justice-motivated teachers hold themselves to too high a standard.

Summary

I intended this study to explore the ways teacher leaders define educational social justice for themselves and what that means in their teaching and as leaders within their community of practice. The three themes that emerged about teacher leadership from the survey are leadership as service, leadership by example, and leadership as a process not a position. Identifying as a social justice advocate is a continuum rather than a binary, with most teachers aspiring towards it and feeling like more work was necessary to embrace the title. From interviews with selected participants, three other themes about educational social justice emerged. One, they make conscious curricular choices to reflect social justice objectives. Two, as teachers they must navigate and negotiate competing political climates, both locally and nationally. And finally, these teachers feel a personal toll and feel a personal impact of social justice-motivated teaching.

These themes reflected and reinforced findings from previous studies. Interestingly, none of the interview participants used the term culturally relevant pedagogy to refer to their own practices or philosophical lens, yet much of what they described could be seen as aligning with the tenets set out by Dr. Gloria Ladson-Billings (1995). They also explored both the potential and limitations of collaboration with colleagues as a means to reinventing and recentering curriculum. These participants found that formal collaboration, school policies, and critical

national events provided both support and challenges to working towards social justice

objectives. Applying Bronfenbrenner's (1976) socioecological systems theory as a framework to

these findings suggests that there are several places within these nested systems that may serve

as locations of meaningful changes towards greater social justice within a school.

Chapter 5: Conclusions, Implications, and Limitations

Introduction

The goal of this qualitative study was to explore the ways teacher leaders define educational social justice for themselves and their students. The purpose was to contribute to the body of literature teachers' own perceptions and experiences of how they attempt to teach and lead for social justice within their context and roles. By capturing the beliefs and experiences of secondary social studies teachers across different teaching settings, the participants added rich detail as to how they viewed their own work for educational social justice and what they identified as the forces that supported their work and the barriers that made the work challenging.

Three research questions guided this study:

1. How do teacher leaders define leading for educational social justice in their own roles?

2. What factors do teacher leaders identify that support their efforts for social justice teaching?

3. What barriers do teacher leaders identify as impacting their social justice goals?

Summary of the Study

This qualitative study was intended to explore the ways teacher leaders define educational social justice for themselves and what that means in their teaching. By using written surveys and semistructured interviews, teacher leaders shared their own definitions of teacher leadership and educational social justice. The three themes that emerged about teacher leadership from the survey are leadership as service, leadership by example, and leadership as a process, not a position. Identifying as a social justice advocate was a continuum rather than a binary, with most teachers aspiring towards it and feeling like more work was necessary to embrace the title.

Within follow-up interviews, three other themes about educational social justice emerged. One, teachers made conscious curricular choices to reflect social justice objectives. Two, as teachers they had to navigate and negotiate competing political climates, both locally and nationally. And finally, these teachers felt a personal toll and felt a personal impact of social justice-motivated teaching. These participants found that formal collaboration, school policies, and critical national events provided both support and challenges to working towards social justice objectives.

Implications for Policy and Practice

This study adds greater understanding of how teachers conceptualize and try to operationalize educational social justice in their classrooms. Additionally, it illuminates how these practices are shared among teachers or, alternatively, prevented from being shared. For instructional leaders, site administrators, and district leaders, it provides insight into how school sites can go about supporting teachers and the adoption of explicit social justice instruction, including CRP or more culturally sustaining practices and procedures. There are three implications for policy and practice.

Teachers, particularly social studies teachers, feel a unique responsibility to engage in conversations about social justice in their classrooms. The teachers in this study felt like it was important to provide students with opportunities and space as well as critical thinking and speaking skills to discuss controversial issues. In particular, they were motivated by current events and being able to address ongoing national situations in real time. This means that in order to be able to incorporate these issues, curriculum must be flexible and planning and pacing must be fluid. Collaboration with like-minded colleagues is important to keep courses aligned, but there needs to be room for teachers to create responsive and relevant lessons as events unfold. Along those same lines, when designing course outlines, the focus of historical

investigation or inquiry should include present-day relevance. Teachers, and social studies departments as a whole, may be motivated to do this but also may need the support or approval of administration. The balance between historical analysis through a social justice lens and studying current critical events as they occur is one that site administrators can support and encourage in department collaboration.

The teachers in this study acknowledged that there were both site and district policies that supported social justice work and greater equity, yet there was often a disconnect or lack of understanding about what the policies mean in daily practice. In some cases, there may be an implementation gap between what policy says and what is occurring in individual classrooms. There also appeared to be communication gaps among district leadership, site administrators, classroom teachers and families. One implication is that policies are important, but policies alone are not enough to make equity and social justice clear priorities or put those priorities into practice. Well-crafted, equity-minded policies are one step in the process, not the end of the efforts.

Finally, the burden of contentious political debate and being targets of that politically motivated acrimony weighs heavily on teachers. The cumulative effect of COVID, racial reckonings, and partisan conflict is resulting in many teachers considering leaving the classroom altogether. None of the teachers in this study said they themselves were quitting, but many mentioned burnout or exhaustion from the last few years of high-stress teaching. Given the personal responsibility many feel, coupled with the uncertainty or controversy surrounding school policies, social studies teachers in particular are bearing the brunt of this stress. Although there is no quick or easy solution, the personal toll of teaching a contested subject in a contentious environment must be taken into consideration by administrators. It is a factor in the

creation of new policies as well as a management concern. Unless it is addressed, schools may lose important advocates of social justice and key players in increasing equitable teaching.

Recommendations for Policy and Practice

I undertook this research motivated to find ways that teachers can be leaders in equity and social justice in schools. This study explored teachers' voices about what it is like to be engaged in that work—most importantly, where they are finding support for social justice efforts and identifying the challenges or barriers to progress on this front. The teachers interviewed each offered clear, insightful ideas about how teacher leaders can be empowered to take more of a role in working towards social justice in their schools. Their answers were that schools can make social justice an explicit priority, reassure teachers that they will be supported in that work, and hold all teachers accountable for those priorities. Based on those findings, I offer some recommendations for policy and practice to move social justice efforts forward.

First and foremost, schools should find systemic ways in which highly skilled, effective teachers can be true leaders for social justice teaching. When we speak of equity in schools, it is rightfully focused on students that have been historically denied equal access to opportunity. A lesser considered question of equity relates to teachers and the ways in which they are excluded from decision-making and leadership roles. Social justice-oriented teachers sometimes may feel stymied or frustrated that their beliefs in culturally relevant curriculum and teaching practices are not adopted by reluctant colleagues over whom they have no authority. Many want to stay in their classrooms, working directly with students, but would also like to be leaders, spreading their impact in a greater context. Schools and districts should develop pathways for teachers to have more say over what gets taught and how policies are developed and implemented on their campuses. Rather than having these teachers operate in isolation or rely on informal and

83

interpersonal relationships to create more representative and socially just teaching, they should have formal positions of leadership. Empowering teachers who, in turn, teach in such a way to empower and engage the very students that have been historically disenfranchised seems like a meaningful step towards greater equity for both students and teachers.

Because many teachers are experiencing burnout and exhaustion and those committed to social justice may also be feeling a greater sense of uncertainty, both site and district administrators should develop and communicate support systems for teachers. Emails about self-care or links for wellness resources are not sufficient. In addition to increasing protections for students, policies regarding identity and expression need to be extended to explicitly apply to teachers as well. Districts and sites can also clearly communicate support for teachers teaching truthful but contested topics in social studies, literature, or science courses. Processes that allow parents or community members to express concerns yet equally protect a teacher's right to use accurate materials that represent multiple perspectives would reassure teachers who may worry about attacks against their teaching. It would also send a clear message that equity and social justice are living priorities within schools, not just talking points. Additionally, administrators can actively cultivate humanizing workplaces where all people—teachers, staff, and students alike—feel respected and valued. This may include integrated social and emotional services, limiting additional uncompensated duties or expectations, or encouraging personal growth or innovations within the school.

Undergirding both greater support for teachers and a pathway for formalized teacher leadership is the idea that schools and districts must put social justice at the forefront of their decision-making. Social justice and equity must be an explicit and stated philosophy that guides action, including the allocation of resources. Unless social justice is the guiding principle, it

often gets overshadowed by other demands on leadership (Theoharis, 2007). School leaders must make it the priority, which means many of these policies and practices may be inconvenient and other traditional priorities may be superseded. However, the historical marginalization of certain groups of students and inequitable educational outcomes for them did not happen accidentally or all at once. Thus, an educational system that is representative of all students and provides equal access and opportunities will not happen overnight or without concentrated and focused efforts.

Recommendations for Future Study

Teacher leadership, although poorly defined, remains a rich area for study. More qualitative studies that investigate the informal or unofficial ways in which teachers act as instructional leaders would offer new insights into how instructional shifts, particularly towards something like CRP, proliferate across a campus or beyond. With districts across California grappling with the implementation of ethnic studies as a graduation requirement, there is great potential for case studies, action research, and longitudinal studies. All of these, particularly case studies, would provide new insights into and understanding of how communities respond to explicit social justice instruction as well as how teachers make sense of and implement this curriculum.

Because the participants in this study were predominantly White, studies looking at the experiences of teachers of color are particularly important to add to the literature. The voices of students are also absent from this study, and are lacking in much of the existing literature as well. Once again, the adoption of ethnic studies may provide a unique opportunity to explore student experiences. Because the political atmosphere and corresponding critical events that have occurred in the last 5 years were so prominent in the findings of this study, research concerning

ongoing and future events will also provide opportunities for new insights and understandings of teachers, leadership, and teaching for social justice.

Limitations

The purpose of this study is to better understand teacher leaders and their experiences leading for educational social justice. There are a few caveats for this research. There is a perception among some high school content teachers that social justice and all things "cultural" are only important in social studies classes. Because I used participants who were all from the UCDHP, I worry the findings might reaffirm those beliefs. Because content and curriculum specific to the social studies classroom is a key theme, it may be difficult to draw recommendations across the disciplines. I did not ask for demographic information on the survey; however, the three interview participants were White. I am aware that the lack of racial diversity among the participants limits the perspectives and experiences represented. A similar study using only teachers of color as participants would provide rich and compelling data.

Another limitation is that I do not have firsthand knowledge of what the participants look like in the act of teaching. The student perspective on these leaders as teachers was not part of this study, but is an important factor for future consideration. Nor are the perspectives of colleagues or administrators included. Again, these were not part of the research questions guiding the study but are factors in studying leadership. I also did not examine how these teachers' leadership activities impacted their students or their achievement. These areas were not specifically part of this study but are potential topics for further research that would add to the current body of knowledge.

Finally, conducting any work with teachers this year came in the midst of COVID and what have been the most difficult years in most educators' careers. The trauma of these last years

lingers in our schools, for both teachers and students. In a best-case scenario, schools would be focusing on rebuilding their communities of learners to address these traumas and coming up with ways to build upon the lessons we've all learned. However, participants did not speak about this happening. Despite the frequent use of the term "reimagining" schools and education, this has not held true, and, as reflected in the interviews, many teachers are overwhelmed, burnt out, or even pessimistic about their impact in this current year. The extreme exhaustion of the last two school years will not go away overnight. In this context, my ability to really capture the experiences of teacher leaders is somewhat compromised. On the other hand, this may have also lent itself to insightful self-reflection on the part of participating teachers.

Conclusion

Much like the boy who cried wolf, people are constantly saying public education is "in crisis" or that we have reached a "moment of truth" for school reform. I am hesitant to join the chorus, but the next few years may truly be a critical moment in the future of teaching and learning. The last 2 years are frequently being described as "twin pandemics" of COVID and racial reckoning. Both of these have direct and profound impacts on our schools, our students, and our teachers. This study may provide a new perspective on ways forward to create schools that are more welcoming to both teachers and students. A year of navigating teaching online and during COVID threatens to deplete the already diminishing ranks of teachers through burnout and frustration. Without changes to the way teachers are managed and supported, the looming teacher shortage will only be exacerbated. Students are also in desperate need of more relevant and representative curriculum and instruction. Ideally, this study has raised issues of both teacher and student dissatisfaction and adds to our knowledge about how to motivate, engage, and empower teachers and students.

In terms of my own practice, I believe this research will help me clarify the next steps of my career. My work in CANDEL has only strengthened my drive to fight for greater equity for all students and heightened the sense of urgency for this work. I am a teacher first and foremost and I continue to explore ways that I can be an instructional leader as a teacher. The routes for formal leadership within public education are truly limited and make it challenging for teachers to feel their contributions help move the needle for all students, even those outside our own classrooms. If nothing else, I am undertaking this research for my own benefit, knowing that I am not the only teacher seeking ways to lead from that position.

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Appendix A

Dear History Project Teacher Leader,

My name is Siobhan Reilley. I am a doctoral student in Educational Leadership at the University of California, Davis, and am currently an intervention teacher at Rio Linda High School in Twin Rivers USD. I was previously a social studies teacher at John F. Kennedy High School for 16 years. My focus is on teacher leaders and educational social justice.

As part of my dissertation work at UC Davis, I am currently interviewing teacher leaders who are committed to increasing equity, opportunity, and representation for historically marginalized students. I am interested in how teachers experience this work and how they identify the forces that support them and those that hinder or make their work more challenging.

I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to discuss the study with you and learn more about your experiences and perspectives as a teacher leader. Participation is voluntary and any information you provide will be kept confidential. Please let me know if you have any questions about me or the study. I look forward to hearing from you.

If you have any questions before or after completing the survey, please email me directly. If you would like to get started, the link below is for the Google Survey. Thank you so much for your consideration and participation.

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfpnRIMNWq_q1X9WdqMmqVFhXTX9rbej0uam fhCOS3EYL4VfA/viewform?usp=sf_link

Sincerely,

Siobhan Reilley

sireilley@ucdavis.edu
916-712-2974

Appendix B

Google Survey for teacher leader participants

- How long have you been teaching?
- How long have you been at your current site?
- Briefly describe why you chose teaching as your profession.

- Please choose any/all positions you currently hold on your campus.
    Lead/Chair of a department
    Lead/Chair of a professional learning community (PLC)
    Lead/Chair of a small learning community (SLC)
    New teacher mentor/advisor (Induction Program)
    Cooperating/mentor teacher (Student Teacher)
    Activities Director/Student Leadership Advisor
    Athletic Director
    Teacher on Special Assignment (TOSA)
    Other

- Briefly describe your responsibilities in the roles selected above.
    Lead/Chair of a department
    Lead/Chair of a professional learning community (PLC)
    Lead/Chair of a small learning community (SLC)
    New teacher mentor/advisor (Induction Program)
    Cooperating/mentor teacher (Student Teacher)
    Activities Director/Student Leadership Advisor
    Athletic Director
    Teacher on Special Assignment (TOSA)
    Other

- Please list and describe any roles or positions you hold outside of your campus that relate to your teaching or job as an educator:

- Briefly describe or define "educational social justice."

- Briefly describe or define "teacher leadership."

- To what extent do you identify as a social justice advocate?

Appendix C

Semistructured Interview Questions: *Interview questions probe teachers' lived experiences and narrow more specifically to forces or conditions that either encourage/support social justice and leadership or limit it.*

Interview Protocol

<u>Header</u>
Date/Time of Interview:
Location:
Interviewer Name: Siobhan Reilley
Respondent Name & Title:

1. To what extent do you consider your teaching to be social justice work?

2. How (if at all) has your definition of educational social justice changed over your career?

3. What connections are there between your personal life and your teaching life and how does this impact your role as a teacher leader? (For example, participation in other civic organizations or activities outside of your professional life?)

4. What is the formal leadership structure at your school? Where do you fit?

5. What policies at your school support working towards social justice objectives?

6. What policies undermine or hinder working towards social justice objectives?

7. What kind of resistance have you encountered? From whom?

8. What support or justification have you experienced? From whom or what?

9. What has been the impact of the recent political climate?

10. How has COVID changed your ideas about education?

11. In your opinion as a teacher leader, what do you think would allow for greater teacher leadership or for empowering teachers to take a greater lead in social justice work?

12. Is there anything else you like to say about teacher leadership or social justice work as a teacher? What didn't I ask?

Appendix D

Thank you again for participating in my research study. The information you provided contributed to what I hope is an exploration of what it means to be a teacher leader for educational social justice that reflects and honors the experiences of teacher leaders.

I am attaching two documents for your review and comment. The first is a transcript of our interview. I used a professional transcription service and then reviewed the transcript while listening to the audio again to check for any discrepancies. Please let me know if you notice anything that I may have missed within the next week (April 23-May 1).

The second document is a draft of the participant vignette I wrote based on your survey and interview responses. The purpose of the vignette is to summarize s few specific responses and provide an overview of your answers before discussing the themes that emerged across participants' responses. Please let me know if you have any questions or corrections. You see that I used an alias, chosen by keeping your first initial but using a different name with a similar sound. If you have objections to the pseudonym I chose, please also let me know by May 1.

Thank you again and I look forward to sharing my completed finals with you early this summer. Hope your school year is winding down smoothly.

Thanks,
Siobhan Reilley