

Teaching for social justice: An ambiguous and uncertain endeavor

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TEACHING FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE: AN AMBIGUOUS AND UNCERTAIN ENDEAVOR

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ABSTRACT

TEACHING FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE: AN AMBIGUOUS AND UNCERTAIN ENDEAVOR

Ruchi Agarwal

In this research, I document and analyze how four beginning elementary school teachers (with an articulated commitment to social justice) conceptualize and enact social justice curricula in an urban school setting. The teachers in this study, Vera, Mariam, Tanisha, and Hannah each graduated from Teachers College, Columbia University elementary education Master's preservice program and were in their first or second year of teaching when this study was conducted. This inquiry took place from August, 2006 through June, 2007 in a single, New York City public school located in Harlem.

I used qualitative multiple-case study methodology in order to explore: (a) beginning teachers' conceptions of social justice curriculum, (b) if and how beginning teachers incorporate social justice issues into their practice, and (c) the supports and/or hindrances teachers face in their attempt to enact social justice curricula. Qualitative methods for collecting the data included formal observations, informal chats, collaborative group discussions, and individual interviews.

Through a careful analysis of the data, several findings emerged: (1) Vera, Mariam, Tanisha, and Hannah conceptualized teaching for social justice differently; (2) regardless of their understandings, beliefs, and ideas around social justice, these teachers collectively viewed teaching for social justice as separate, special, and isolated from the general curriculum; and (3)

accountability strongly influenced the curriculum decisions Vera, Mariam, Tanisha, and Hannah made in the classroom.

Even as all four teachers expressed a strong desire to teach for social justice, the findings of this study point to the important, overarching conclusion that a commitment to teach for social justice is not enough to enact discreet lessons with social justice content. Vera, Mariam, Tanisha, and Hannah remind us that teachers must be better prepared with the skills, understanding, and ability to navigate through a context of high-stakes testing and accountability in order to teach for social justice.

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Ruchi Agarwal

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I – INTRODUCTION

My own understanding and commitment to social justice, along with my experiences as a beginning teacher, inspired me to study how beginning elementary school teachers conceptualize and enact social justice curricula in an urban school setting. This inquiry took place from August, 2006 through June, 2007 in a single, New York City public school located in Harlem. The four beginning teachers in this study, Vera, Mariam, Tanisha, and Hannah each graduated from Teachers College, Columbia University elementary education Master's preservice program and were in their first or second year of teaching when this study was conducted. All four teachers expressed a common commitment to teach for social justice.

Qualitative methods for collecting the data included formal observations, informal chats, collaborative group discussions, and individual interviews. Grounded in critical feminist methodology, the data were collected and analyzed in a sequential process that included several stages.

Through a careful analysis of the data, several findings emerged: (1) Tanisha, Vera, Mariam, and Hannah each conceptualized teaching for social justice in different ways; (2) these teachers collectively viewed teaching for social justice as separate, special, and isolated from the general curriculum; and (3) accountability strongly influenced what was and was not taught in the classroom.

Even as all four teachers expressed a strong desire to teach for social justice, the findings of this study point to the important, overarching conclusion that a commitment to teach for social justice is not enough. Vera, Mariam, Tanisha, and Hannah remind us that teachers must be better prepared with the skills, understanding, and ability to navigate through a context of high-stakes testing and accountability in order to teach for social justice.

Preface

My interest and commitment to this research study did not just begin during my doctoral work at Teachers College, Columbia University. Rather, my commitment to understanding how beginning teachers conceptualize and enact social justice curricula is deeply rooted in childhood, teacher education program, and beginning teacher experiences.

I enter into this research as a middle-class, Indian-American woman; however, only recently have I been able to claim and be proud of these labels. To backtrack, I grew up in a predominately white affluent neighborhood and attended a school of similar demographics. From the very first day of school I knew I was different: my skin was darker; my food spicier; my religion different; and my parents spoke to me in a language other than English. I spent my entire academic career until graduate school disguising these differences. Craving any chance to be the “same,” I encouraged and appreciated comments from peers and friends like: “I forget that you are not white.” Such comments made me feel like my efforts were worthwhile. My goal in school was to be academically successful, but more importantly to be just like everyone else.

In graduate school, a single multicultural education class served as a platform to discuss issues surrounding race, culture, and ethnicity. These were discussions I had never had before. I watched colleagues’ fury at the idea of white privilege, I listened to my professor share her experience of being watched in her own neighborhood by police officers because of the color of her skin, and I heard my Jewish friend cry because of the Christian prayer her sorority asked her to recite before each meal. These conversations and others served as a place for me to find myself as a minority and unpack my reasons and necessity to “act white.” Through these discussions, I gained the confidence to critically look inward and examine what I had internalized through my childhood and schooling experience. I had internalized the idea that

white skin was better than dark skin and being white was better than being Indian. Realizing then and now I could never be white, I started on a journey to accept and value my culture, heritage, ethnicity, race, and language. I left my teacher education program with a clearer understanding of who I was as a woman, as a teacher, and as a student.

Committed to the ideals and visions of multicultural education presented in my teacher education program, I focused my Master's studies toward understanding how multicultural education can build social awareness in the classroom. The following excerpt is taken from the theoretical framework of my Master's thesis:

I want each student in my class to feel comfortable enough to share who they are and where they come from, and I want each student in my class to be able to walk down the street with his or her head high and know who he or she is and be proud of that person. Additionally, I want each student in my class to value the differences of others. To know that Karen has only four fingers on one hand and plays basketball and writes, to know that Sandeep wears a turban for religious reasons and is a great friend, to know that Bob has difficulty reading and tries hard every day. Multicultural education makes teaching powerful. I truly believe that students can learn to accept themselves and others. With this acceptance, a community in the classroom can be built.

Upon graduating, I was determined to use my study of multicultural education to challenge students to accept themselves and others in the classroom.

Although my commitment and passion toward multicultural education remained unaltered when I entered the classroom, my ability to enact such curriculum was hindered. Pressures such as mandated curriculum, high-stakes testing, structured time periods, lack of support and resources constrained me from teaching the way I had envisioned teaching during my credential program. I knew what I wanted my students to learn, but I had no idea of how to teach it. Additionally, I could not find the space or time to enact multicultural curriculum, nor could I find any support or resources to help me in this journey.

As a beginning teacher, I did what I could to challenge my students to accept one another and learn about each others' differences; I tried to bring in literature that represented the multiple backgrounds in my classroom; and I also attempted to create a classroom that felt safe and secure for all of my students. And yet, these isolated and minimal attempts to enact multicultural education left me with feelings of frustration and helplessness. I felt lost, unsupported, and ineffective in my effort to teach multicultural education.

I bring my own personal experience into this research because I know that feelings of passion and commitment can drain quickly once you step into a context of schooling in which that passion and commitment remains unnurtured. As a beginning teacher, I felt that my teacher education program had prepared me to be the teacher I wanted to be; yet, I could not meet those expectations in the classroom. I could not find the time, space, resources, and support to guide me in my commitment.

Both in my Master's program and as a beginning teacher, I conceptualized multicultural education centered on a "human relations" approach, a model of multicultural education in Sleeter and Grant's (1999) typology of multicultural programs, in which teachers strive to improve affective dimensions in the classroom by improving how children feel about themselves and each other. Since then, my work as a doctoral student has changed my understanding of multicultural education to be more in line with Sleeter and Grant's (1999) social-justice oriented approach: multicultural education that is multicultural and social reconstructionist. This model "calls attention to social justice issues and empowering young people to make social changes...[and] focuses much more explicitly on social critique and democratic citizen participation" (p. vii). In the classroom, this model of multicultural education encourages students to critique the social system and understand constructs of oppression as well as ways to

challenge them, and recommends that teachers practice a democratic ethic in which they give students opportunities to participate in decision-making and self-government (Sleeter & Grant, 1999).

It is my belief that the role of the teacher is not just to teach students to accept themselves and one another; rather, a teacher must challenge the myriad inequities that exist in our country, such as hunger, poverty, and access to power. For this reason, I have moved away from my initial understanding of multicultural education towards a more radical approach to teaching, centered on social justice, which encourages students to understand the constructs of inequities and oppression in our schools, communities, and country and consider ways to challenge these constructs (Sleeter & Grant, 1999).

I present this detailed description of my journey from teacher education to the classroom, in the attempt to ground the heart and inspiration of my work. It is my childhood, education, and experiences as a beginning teacher that have moved me to examine and understand how beginning teachers committed and prepared to teach for social justice enact social justice in an urban school context of high-stakes testing and accountability. As I understand the challenge of translating conception into practice, it is my hope that my research pursuits will aid me in better preparing teachers to enact social justice curriculum in their classrooms. Thus, I embrace this research with the desire to understand and support beginning teachers in the challenging, demanding, and necessary experience of teaching for social justice.

Background of the Study

Considering the changing student demographics and the larger socio-cultural, political issues related to our work as teachers, teacher educators, and researchers, it is clear that attention to social justice is more critical than ever (Wiedeman, 2002). With the poverty rate among

families in the U.S. running at about 23 percent, many students are affected by the stresses of low-income households (Gay & Howard, 2000; Ukpokodu, 2002). Additionally, more than one-third of students in the nation's schools are children of color, and immigration and birth rate patterns could push this number to almost 50 percent by 2020 (Ukpokodu, 2002; Gay & Howard, 2000). Concurrently, some schools have documented over 100 different languages spoken by students (Ukpokodu, 2002). Meanwhile, approximately 80 percent of the teachers in American schools are White, middle-class, monolingual, and of rural or suburban origin (Gay & Howard, 2000; Ukpokodu, 2002;). This long-standing mismatch between students and teachers along with other contributing factors, such as the uneven distribution of resources and funding (Kozol, 1991; Rothstein, 2004), have worked together to create a United States public school system that has continually failed to adequately serve students that do not fit into the White, male-dominant, English-speaking, Christian, heterosexual, able mainstream culture of America (Darling-Hammond, French, & Garcia-Lopez, 2002; Kozol, 1991; Zollers et al., 2000). To battle the unjust institution of schooling, teacher education programs such as Teachers College, Columbia University, Boston College, and University of California, Los Angeles, among many others, have attempted to put issues of social justice "front and center" (Wiedeman, 2002).

The challenge to incorporate issues of social justice in the work of preparing teachers has evolved slowly through the contributions of multiple fields of discourse (Wiedeman, 2002). In 1979, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) required that colleges and universities seeking accreditation show evidence of planning for multicultural education in their curricula (Wiedeman, 2002). Although preservice multicultural education programs have since spread, educational researchers have been disappointed with the results,

which have generally focused on building teachers' knowledge and sensitivity to cultural differences (Cochran-Smith, 2003; Goodwin, 1997).

The work of multiculturalists, such as Sleeter and Grant (1994/1988) set the stage for larger discussions surrounding teacher education and social justice. Their work contributes to teacher educators' and researchers' understanding of what it means to teach for social justice by linking the work of teachers to the ideals of equity and accessibility in the schooling process (Wiedeman, 2002). Various other communities of discourse, such as critical theory, anti-racist education, care theory, critical multiculturalism, and Critical Race Theory, have also contributed to the evolution of social justice as a critical concern in teacher education (Wiedeman, 2002). Thus, the integration of social justice issues in teacher education continues to evolve slowly in relation to how teacher education programs conceptualize teaching for social justice and prepare their preservice teachers to teach for social justice.

Today, approximately 700 institutions in the United States are part of the NCATE system, with a growing number of institutions seeking accreditation. NCATE continues to profess the importance of preparing high quality teachers through its fourth standard, "evaluate curriculum and experiences for candidates to acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to help all students learn" (NCATE, p. 10). Although the integration of social justice issues in teacher education continues to evolve slowly, the visible increase in institutions with a social justice stance, may provide evidence of a larger number of teacher education programs committed to issues surrounding social justice (McDonald, 2007).

In a search of literature surrounding teacher education and social justice, teacher education programs with a social justice stance seek to prepare teachers to do the following (Darling-Hammond et al., 2002; Zollers, Albert, & Cochran-Smith, 2000): (1) challenge and

alter an educational system that is not adequately serving large numbers of children, particularly poor children, children of color, and children with special needs (Kozol, 1991; Oakes & Lipton, 2003; Zollers et al., 2000), (2) develop and enact curriculum that is relevant to the increasingly racially and ethnically diverse student population with which they work (Zeichner, 2003), and/or (3) challenge their students to think critically and prepare them to be active participants in our democratic society (Oakes & Lipton, 2003; Nieto, 2000). Each of these three themes continued to emerge in my review of literature surrounding teacher education and social justice.

The themes are often labeled or demonstrated in different ways. For example, some teacher education programs that prepare teachers to challenge and alter the educational system may label teachers' work as social change agents (Sleeter & Grant, 1994/1998), teaching to change the world (Oakes & Lipton, 2003), and/or teaching against the grain (Lane, Lacefield-Parachini, & Isken, 2003). These labels do not mean that teachers are prepared in similar ways or that they enact curriculum in similar ways, rather the conceptualization of the teacher as an agent of change is alike. In addition to the three themes, many of the teacher education programs committed to social justice profess the importance of social justice being integrated throughout the program, rather than taught in a single, isolated class (Cochran-Smith, 1995).

Recent studies show that an integrated vision of teaching and learning focused on social-justice principles in teacher education programs improves teachers' opportunities to learn (McDonald, 2005). In contrast, previous and current piecemeal approaches to multicultural education and diversity have little success in preparing students to actively understand and challenge the inequities that exist in our country (McDonald, 2005). Piecemeal approaches, such as what Sleeter and Bank (1994/1988) call a "human relations" approach, attempt to address "diversity" through the addition of courses in multicultural education, clinical experiences with

students from diverse backgrounds, and opportunities created for white, middle-class teachers to consider their beliefs and attitudes about students of color and low-income students (Goodwin, 1997; Grant, 1984; Ladson-Billings, 1995; McDonald, 2005).

My teacher education program, for example, consisted of a single, one-month multicultural education course. Because this class was separate from our other methodology and theory courses, some students felt that they no longer had to think of issues surrounding race, ethnicity, and culture that were previously discussed in our multicultural education class. In contrast, teacher education programs with an integrated vision of social justice, embed issues of social justice throughout the program. By exploring issues of race, culture, class, dis/ability, gender, sexual orientation and language, preservice teachers are challenged to examine their own belief systems in relation to their teaching practices and schooling (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Oakes & Lipton, 2003; McDonald, 2005; Zeichner, 2003). Instead of one class, discussions surrounding social justice are embedded throughout the teacher education program- increasing preservice teachers' opportunities to learn.

Because teacher education programs may uphold teaching for social justice as their central purpose, teachers may leave their programs prepared and committed to teach for social justice. However, when beginning teachers enter their own classrooms, obstacles such as high-stakes testing, curricular mandates, and their own inexperience and self-doubt can render teaching for social justice overwhelming and seemingly impossible. Moreover, within their classrooms, beginning teachers, no longer have the support structures of their teacher education program, yet are faced with the same responsibilities as their experienced colleagues (Costigan & Crocco, 2004; Feiman & Nemser, 2003). Research is needed that understands how beginning teachers, despite these obstacles, attempt to enact social justice curricula in their classrooms.

Teaching for Social Justice

Just as there is great diversity in the how teacher education programs prepare teachers to teach for social justice, there is a wide spectrum of what teachers label as curriculum enactments of social justice. According to Oakes and Lipton (2003), teaching for social justice can be understood as having at least three components: (1) teachers consider the values and politics that pervade education, (2) teachers ask critical questions about how dominant culture and hegemony came to be and who benefits from them, and (3) teachers pay particular attention to inequalities associated with race, social class, language, gender, and other social categories, and look for alternatives to the inequalities. Thus, to teach for social justice is often seen as more than adopting a new up-to-date curriculum or adding innovative strategies to a teaching bag of tricks; rather, many teachers committed to social justice work to arouse a sense of injustice in their students (Makler & Hubbard, 2000). As Ayers, Hunt, and Quinn (1998) note:

To teach for social justice is to teach for enhanced perception and imaginative explorations, for the recognition for social wrongs, of sufferings, of pestilences wherever and whenever they arise. It is to find models in literature and in history of the indignant ones, the ones forever ill at ease, and the loving ones who have taken the side of the victims' pestilences, whatever their names or places of origin. It is to teach so that the young may be awakened to the joy of working for transformation in the smallest places, so that they may become healers and change their worlds. (p. xlv)

Even as teachers alone cannot overcome the social injustices that impede democracy, "they can play an important role in nurturing a more active form of citizenship among young people" (Kelly & Brandes, 2001, p. 438). For this reason, teachers committed to social justice may strive to teach their students to "learn analytic, communicative, and strategic skills and to think about the consequences for social action based on their analysis of public policy issues" (Kelly & Brandes, 2001, p. 438). Moreover, teachers may work to develop in their students, "capacities such as debate,

reflection, and discussion around, differences, criticism, persuasion and decision making” (Kelly & Brandes, 2001, P. 438). Thus, teachers committed to teach for social justice may feel charged with a mission, not just to teach their students to read and write, but rather prepare them with the skills, knowledge, and commitment needed to change the world to make it more just and democratic (Banks, 2004).

Challenges for Beginning Teachers

A significant amount of literature explores how beginning teachers learn to teach in their first year (Costigan & Crocco, 2004; Feiman-Nemser, 2003; Kauffman, Johnson, & Kardos, 2002). I remember my own challenges as a beginning teacher and all the questions I had such as: where to put the desks, what do with the desks, how to arrange the classroom, who are the students, and what their families are like (Feiman-Nemser, 2003). Beginning teachers are faced with continual dilemmas such as: What am I supposed to teach? How do I meet the needs of the diverse learners in the classroom? When should I plan conferences with parents? How do I prepare my students for the standardized tests? They no longer have the support structures of their teacher education program and/or student teaching placements, now they are on their own, faced with the same responsibilities as their experienced colleagues (Feiman-Nemser, 2003). Specific to urban schools, beginning teachers may be confronted with added challenges such as overcrowding, limited resources, large number of students at risk for academic failure, insufficient funding for supplies, and/or adequate time to address students' individual needs (Gehrke, 2005). These questions and more represent part of the beginning teachers' learning.

Like many other beginning teachers, teachers committed to social justice may be inducted into a profession in which standardization and accountability are the norm (Costigan et al., 2004). Standard setting developed as way to promote common understanding among

students, teachers and parents, in regards to goals, expectations, and equitable access to challenging curriculum (Sleeter, 2005). Unfortunately, standardization is a consequence of standard setting when attempts to improve student learning become bureaucratized at the state and national level (Sleeter, 2005). Standardization has not served as a basis of eliminating inequities in schools; rather, standardization has led to a homogenized and static curriculum unconcerned with "diverse funds of knowledge" (Sleeter, 2005, p. 34). The context of standardization and accountability may create challenges for beginning teachers in what they want to teach and what they are able to teach in their individual school setting.

After completing a teacher education program committed to social justice, some preservice teachers committed to social justice may hope to cultivate critical perspectives in their students and reduce social inequities in their classrooms and community through the enactment of social justice curriculum (Damico & Riddle, 2004). However, the pressures and constraints of their school settings, such as standardization and accountability, may require teachers committed to social justice to negotiate what they want to teach and what they are able to teach within the contexts of their individual school settings. This study seeks to understand how beginning teachers committed and prepared to teach for social justice conceptualize and enact social justice curriculum in their classrooms.

Statement of the Problem and Rationale

Teachers who are committed to teaching for social justice may enter their individual school contexts with a passion and commitment to teach for social justice. Much of this drive may come from their teacher education programs that are also committed to social justice and place issues of social justice and equity "front and center" (Nieto, 2000). Like me, these teachers

may leave their graduate programs with an internal commitment to "change the world," however may struggle to build, integrate, and enact social justice curriculum in the classroom.

In keeping with the increased focus on social justice in some teacher education programs, emphasis should also be placed on the need to understand the tensions and conflicts that can surface when beginning teachers enter their own classroom and how and if they teach for social justice. If we are able to better understand beginning teachers' conflicts and tensions, we may be able to better prepare teachers in preservice programs. This study seeks to examine how beginning teachers conceptualize teaching for social justice and what social justice curriculum they are able to enact in their current school setting.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study is to document and analyze beginning elementary school teachers' conceptions and enactments of social justice curricula in their classrooms. This study explores the convergences and contradictions between what beginning teachers conceptualize as teaching for social justice and what they are able to enact in their current school context. From the perspective of four beginning elementary school teachers, the following research questions guided this study:

Research Questions

- 1) What are beginning teachers' conceptions of social justice curriculum?
- 2) If and how do beginning teachers incorporate social justice issues into their practice?
- 3) What supports and/or hinders beginning teachers in their enactment of social justice curricula?

Theoretical Framework

In this section, I discuss my assumptions surrounding the construction of knowledge and learning to teach. Critical socio-constructivism suggests that, “we do not construct our interpretations in isolation but against a backdrop of shared understandings, practices, language, and so forth” (Schwandt, 2003, p. 305). Therefore, knowledge is not seen as found or discovered, rather as made or constructed (Schwandt, 2003). While critical socio-constructivist theory guides my assumptions in chapter one, critical feminist theory drives my methodology. In chapter three I will delineate how critical feminist theory undergirds the data collection and analysis of this study. The following assumptions stem from a critical socio-constructivist framework:

Social Justice as Non-Hierarchal and Broad

Undergirding this research is an understanding that knowledge is constructed “against a backdrop of shared understandings, practices, and languages” (Schwandt, 2003, p. 305). This critical socio-constructivist theory suggests that ways of understanding may be specific to particular cultures and/or periods of history and are dependent upon the social and historical arrangements prevailing in that culture at that time (Burr, 1995). Therefore, my understanding of social justice, rooted in school, work, and life experiences, may differ from the understandings of a friend, spouse, colleague, and/or participant.

I conceptualize social justice as a combination of both distributive and procedural justice. Distributive justice refers to the distribution of limited goods and resources based on the principles of equity, need, or equality (Reason & Davis, 2005). Procedural justice focuses on the influence during the decision-making process relative to other groups (Reason & Davis, 2005). Thus, social justice as a combination of both procedural and distributive justice is a goal toward

full and equal participation for all groups, an equitable and fair distribution of goods and services, and an environment where all members are physically and psychologically safe and secure (Adams, Bell, & Griffin, 1997; Ayers, Hunt, & Quinn, 1998; Oakes & Lipton, 2003). This viewpoint is heavily centered within a social reconstructionist framework (Sleeter & Grant, 1999).

Although my conception of social justice may differ from others, social constructivist theory suggests the importance of not assuming that one way of knowing is better or nearer to the truth than another (Burr, 1995). Suggesting that there is no single truth, relative forms of oppression are not viewed as a hierarchy, but rather as of equal importance (Adams et al., 1997). Consequentially, an understanding of oppression as non-hierarchical does not suggest that (Adams, 1997):

Different forms of oppression do not affect people in different ways, or do not vary in their intensity or virulence for different groups across different historical periods or various geographical parts of this country, or that their time frames or impact on whole populations do not differ. (p. 5)

Thus, guided by critical social constructivist theory, one way of knowing is not better or closer to the truth. A non-hierarchical and broad understanding of social justice allows one to be open to varied conceptions and enactments of social justice curricula.

Even as my perspective of social justice may align well with a social reconstructionist framework, it is not necessarily the perspective of Vera, Mariam, Hannah, and Tanisha. As a researcher, I do not wish to impose my orientation towards social justice on these teachers, but rather, to understand, examine, and unpack their individual and collective beliefs around teaching for social justice.

Curriculum as Dynamic, Not Fixed

A broad understanding of social justice is imperative to this study and my understanding of social justice curriculum. Just as there is a wide spectrum of understandings related to social justice, there is a wide spectrum of what teachers label as curricular enactments of social justice. I do not take an evaluative stance, but rather, engage in research that examines teachers' enactments of social justice curricula based on their current conceptualizations of social justice and individual school settings. For the purpose of this study, a curriculum enactment (Snyder, Bolin & Zumwalt, 1992) is seen as an interaction among teacher, students, and content, and not a simple delivery of information or curriculum. Thus, teachers and students interact to interpret ideas and construct meaning; accordingly, curriculum enactment is seen as dynamic, rather than fixed.

My understandings of social justice and curricula enactment as broad and non-hierarchical guide me in my efforts to understand teachers' conceptions and enactments of social justice curricula as a product of particular classrooms and conditions, circumstances that are inevitably dependent and altered by teachers' and students' lived experience.

Learning from Experience

Critical socio-constructivist thinking suggests that meaning is constructed as children and/or adults interact in meaningful ways in the world around them (Anderson & Barrera, 1995; Clark, 1998; Green & Gredler, 2002). In a school setting, a social constructivist would encourage complex and multiple representations of the real world, an emphasis on knowledge construction instead of knowledge reproduction, authentic tasks in a meaningful context, learning environments that may be representative of real-world settings, thoughtful and critical reflection,

and a collaborative construction of knowledge (Schwandt, 2003). Thus, learning occurs within a meaningful, experiential, real-world context.

Having the Same Experience but Learning Different Things

In spite of the common commitment of teachers who graduate from a program with a social justice stance, teaching for social justice may look different in each classroom. Teachers that may have graduated from the same teacher education program, taught by the same professors, engaged in the same readings and discussions might conceptualize and enact social justice curriculum very differently. From a critical social constructivist perspective (Anderson & Barerra, 1995):

Social reality is perceived as created over time within a context of social interaction. Although the subjective view accepts that there are objects and behaviors external to the individual, it insists that they have no intrinsic meaning in isolation from human perception. Rather, they are interpreted or "constructed" through human perception and cognition. (p. 142)

When new teachers enter the field of education, their beliefs about what social justice looks like and how it should be enacted in the classroom are far from uniform. Instead, such allegiances emerge out of a complex set of circumstances and subjectivities that include teachers' prior experiences, their preservice programs, and their own particular social locations. Thus, how teachers conceptualize and teach for social justice may look different from teacher to teacher, and classroom to classroom, with different goals and different lessons. However, what remains constant for many social justice educators is the commitment to teach for social justice.

Significance for Teacher Educators

The findings of this study may contribute to the existing body of qualitative research that examines the intersection of teacher education and social justice. Previous studies surrounding

teacher education and social justice have examined the efforts by teacher education programs to address social justice issues in university-based courses and/ or curriculum (Ladson-Billings, 2000; McDonald, 2005; Moule, 2005; Zollers et al., 2000). Many of these teacher education programs seek to answer questions about how to best prepare their preservice teachers to teach for social justice through self-studies of their faculty and students. Kelly and Brandes (2001) recognize the need to encourage students to think critically and act on their reasoned convictions to “shift out of neutral” (p. 451); Zollers and colleagues (2000) learn that pursuing social justice requires taking the time to examine understandings of social justice as well as the implications of these understandings for teaching and teacher education; and Quartz (2003) questions what needs to be done to nurture and support social justice educators and alleviate the problem of teacher attrition in urban schools.

My research may contribute to a topic that teacher education research has yet to address, examining the constraints beginning teachers face in their commitment to teach for social justice. This research may provide teacher educators with a greater understanding of how some beginning teachers are conceptualizing and enacting social justice curricula in their individual school settings. Furthermore, it may provide teacher educators with a better understanding of how some beginning teachers, constrained by possible obstacles such as high-stakes testing, curricular mandates, and their own inexperience can render teaching for social justice when it may seem overwhelming and impossible. This research is designed to provide a link between the conversations in teacher education and experiences of beginning teachers, so that beginning teachers may feel better prepared to teach for social justice in their individualized and specific school contexts.

Overview of the Dissertation

The goal of this dissertation is to detail the complex, challenging, and uncertain journey Vera, Mariam, Hannah, and Tanisha faced in enacting their vision of social justice into a context of high-stakes testing and accountability.

Chapter I served as an introduction to this study. In this chapter, I briefly described the demographic imperative, the spectrum of beliefs surrounding social justice, and the struggles beginning teachers may face as they enter their classrooms for the first time. This chapter also detailed the development of this study and the theoretical framework that grounds this work.

Chapter II reviews the literature that informed this study. In Chapter III, I explicate the methodology of the study, including the collection and analysis of the data. Chapter IV is dedicated toward examining Vera, Mariam, Tanisha, and Hannah's conceptions around teaching for social justice. This chapter highlights the difference in their understandings and explores the ways in which the teachers view teaching for social justice as separate and compartmentalized from their everyday work as teachers. In Chapter IV, I also illuminate the role of accountability and choice in regards to the curriculum decisions Vera, Mariam, Hannah, and Tanisha make in the classroom. The dissertation concludes with a summary of the findings, implications, suggestions for future research, and final thoughts.

II--LITERATURE REVIEW

This study sought to understand how beginning teachers' conceptualize and enact social justice curriculum and explores the convergences and contradictions between what beginning teachers' conceptualize as teaching for social justice and what they are able to enact in an urban school context. The literature review is designed to trace the journey from teacher education to the classroom. Therefore, the review begins with empirical research that examines the varying ways teacher education programs conceptualize and prepare teachers to teach for social justice. Next, the review of literature continues with an investigation of findings related to the challenges beginning teachers face in the classroom. The purpose of the review is two-fold: (1) to provide an understanding of the discourse surrounding teacher education and social justice, teaching for social justice, and learning to teach and (2) to situate this research project within the current research in teacher education.

Preparing Teachers to Teach for Social Justice

In this section I first describe the demographic trends in the United States that may challenge some teacher education programs to prepare teachers to teach for social justice. Second, I highlight the various ways teacher education programs with a commitment to social justice may prepare their preservice teachers to teach for social justice.

Responding to the challenges of the demographic imperative, teaching for social justice is necessary and imperative to improve and alter educational opportunities for students outside of the middle-class, male, white norm. The demographic imperative characterizes three interlocking challenges of the United States public school education (Cochran-Smith, 2004; McDonald, 2007): (1) the increasing diverse student population, (2) the gap between students and teachers in terms of lived experiences, and (3) the marked educational disparities in educational

opportunities, resources, and achievement among student groups that differ from one another culturally, racially, linguistically, and socioeconomically.

Because of the ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and religious rise in the United States, increased changes in student population is also visible in our public schools. More than ever, students enrolled in U.S. public schools are from racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse groups (Darling-Hammond et al., 2002; McDonald, 2007). In the year 2000, more than 35% of public school students were students of color; while in some states and many large cities, “minority” students have become the majority. A trend that Darling-Hammond and colleagues (2002) suggest, “will characterize the entire nation by 2020” (p. 1). With the increasing diverse student populations, schools and classrooms represent a greater range of ethnic groups, socioeconomic status, sexual orientations, and abilities than ever before in history. Thus, as student diversity becomes the norm, not the exception, teaching for social justice becomes imperative, not an option, in the 21st century (Cochran-Smith, 2004).

With this deepening ethnic texture, interracial tension and conflict, and increasing percentage of students who speak a first language other than English, teaching for social justice is essential and necessary (Sleeter, 2007). Teaching for social justice, “prepares future citizens to reconstruct society so that it better serves the interests of all groups of people and especially those who are of color, poor, female, gay, lesbian, transsexual, disabled, or any combination of these” (Sleeter and Grant, 1999, p. 188).

Although demographic trends may suggest the importance to incorporate issues surrounding social justice into schools of education, efforts have been “sluggish” (Nieto, 2000). In 1973, the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education (AACTE) made the initial call for schools of education to seriously consider the importance of “diversity” in the

preparation of teachers (Wiedeman, 2002). Soon to follow AACTE's policy statement was the development of standards for teacher preparation by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), which included a focus on diversity in all areas of teacher preparation: curriculum, instruction, and field experiences (Wiedeman, 2002). The efforts of AACTE and NCATE indicated a positive change toward attentions in teacher education programs served towards issues of diversity; however "diversity" during this period was mostly attended to through a piecemeal approach that served to highlight an appreciation of differences or mistake "color-blindness" for educational equity (Cochran-Smith, 1995; Wiedeman, 2002).

Recent discourse in this area has strongly suggested that piecemeal approaches to addressing issues such as race, ethnicity, class, gender, disability, and poverty are inadequate (Wiedeman, 2002). In contrast to the piecemeal approach, some teacher education programs go beyond "color blindness and basket making" (Cochran-Smith, 1995, p. 493), as responses to cultural diversity. In preparing teachers to teach for social justice, these teacher education programs may challenge teachers to critically self-reflect (Cochran-Smith, 1995); develop pedagogy that attends to the multiple learners in the classroom; and facilitate change within their schools and communities. In the hope to better prepare preservice teachers to teach for social justice, some teacher education programs with a social justice stance attempt to place their commitments to social justice at the "front and center," of their program (Wiedeman, 2002).

As an increasing number of teacher education programs emphasize social justice, equity, and diversity as central concerns in the professional preparation of teachers, social justice teacher education programs view preparing teachers, "with the knowledge, dispositions, and practices to work with students from diverse backgrounds as a fundamental responsibility of teacher education" (McDonald, 2007, p. 2048). From this respect, "social justice" has become a new

buzz word, with conflicting and converging definitions (Christensen & Dorn, 1997; McDonald, 2007). For this reason, this next section highlights the common means, visible within the literature, by which teacher education programs prepare teachers to teach for social justice including: (1) critical self-reflection, (2) ascertainment of theoretical knowledge, and (3) facilitation of social change. The purpose of the tenets is to prepare teachers to teach for social justice.

In preparing teachers to teach for social justice (Oakes & Lipton, 2002), teacher education programs may use one or more of the approaches to challenge their teachers to critically reflect on the values and politics that pervade education; question dominant culture and how hegemony came to be; and take action towards inequalities associated with race, social class, language, gender, and other social categories. The tenets are not indicative of social justice teacher education solely because tenets one and two are also common in teacher education programs that are non social justice-oriented as well. For the purpose of this review, I have chosen to separate these tenets. However, as a social justice educator, I would argue that all three tenets are fluid and therefore, possibly intertwined in nature.

Critical Self-Reflection

In this section, I discuss some of the theoretical underpinnings surrounding critical self-reflection and outline a few ways teacher education programs may challenge preservice teachers' beliefs, assumptions, and biases.

Preservice teachers, regardless of race, ethnicity, social-class, ability, sexual orientation, and/or culture may go through a period of critical self-reflection during their teacher education program. The purpose of critical self-reflection is to gain a personal understanding of your own beliefs, assumptions, and biases and transform those beliefs through a greater understanding of

the social inequities that exist in this world (Delgado-Bernal, 1998). This period allowed me to examine and question my need for conformity into dominant white society, my inability to accept and be proud of my own background and culture, and the purposeful choice I made to isolate myself from others of my same race and background.

The idea of critical self-reflection, though woven through many teacher education programs, may be labeled or enacted differently. A teacher education program, for example, may profess the importance for preservice teachers to go through a “transformative” period where teachers “begin to see and understand, the social location of their selves as teachers, in relation to the challenges they are beginning to face, and the young people they hope to teach” (Attwood & Sealle-Collazo, 2002, p. 14). Other teacher education programs may build off Paolo Friere’s (1970) term of “conscientization.” Garcia (1997), a teacher-educator at Santa Clara University, asserts her beliefs around the importance of critical self-reflection:

Teachers must confront certain contradictions in their own identity. Most teacher education candidates have shaped their identity according to a set of mainstream values and beliefs that had denigrated cultural difference...Teacher preparation should theorize a dialectical education process- that is, a praxis of discovery in which teachers recover their own history and identity in order to assist children from marginalized groups to recover theirs. (p. 146-147)

The aim of teacher education programs with this orientation is that through a period of self-reflection, preservice teachers may develop a critical consciousness, a social consciousness, and/or a wide-awareness that may make injustice unendurable (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1992; Howard, 2003; Jennings & Smith, 2002). Thus, the purpose of critical self-reflection is to challenge and transform the beliefs, perspectives, and biases of preservice teachers.

Perspective One: Preparing the White, Monolingual Teacher.

A dominant theoretical perspective among teacher education programs is the need to prepare white, monolingual preservice teachers to teach students of different backgrounds (Gay

& Kirkland, 2003). Teacher education programs that focus their efforts specifically toward white teachers may expect their preservice teachers to work with students that are culturally, economically, racially, and linguistically different from themselves. By developing a consciousness of the dynamics of oppression and privilege in their own lives, teachers may learn to critique and act upon social differences and oppression in their personal lives as well as in their schools and communities. Thus, a vast amount of research on teacher preparation and critical self-reflection purports the necessity to help white, middle class female preservice teachers understand issues such as diversity, inequality, and equity (Knight, 2002).

Teacher education programs and literature that focus on white, middle-upper class preservice teachers may be based on the assumption that solely white, middle-class, able preservice teachers need to critically self-reflect and transform their conceptualizations of social justice. McIntyre (1997) explored how a small group of white middle-upper class female preservice teachers constructed an image of what it means to be white. She found that it was difficult for her participants to, “deal with information that sheds light on the fact that racism is not a past sin belonging to some anonymous white people” (p. 664). She suggests that many white teachers enter their classrooms with a history of white dominance, privilege, and advantage of which they may be completely unaware. Sustaining the image of “good white knight teachers” (McIntyre, 1997, p. 672), the teachers may reproduce myths and stereotypes by believing they are rescuing students of color from bad lives and bad white teachers who are part of “the problem” (McIntyre, 1997). Lacking any reference to preservice teachers of color and/or differing backgrounds, studies such as McIntyre’s (1997), emphasize the dominant perspective that suggests solely white, middle-upper class teachers need to critically self-reflect and transform their conceptualizations of social justice.

Perspective Two: Preparing All Teachers to Teach All Students.

A second, less dominant perspective, critiques the efforts of teacher education programs that solely dedicate their efforts toward preparing white teachers to teach in communities of students with backgrounds different from themselves (Goodwin et al., 1997; Knight, 2002; Montecinos, 1994; Su 1996; Zeichner, 2003). Based on this understanding, proponents of this perspective suggest that all teachers should engage in critical self-reflection, given that, all teachers should be prepared to teach all students (Sleeter, 2004; Zeichner, 2003). Therefore, teacher education programs cannot strictly focus their attention toward the white, monolingual teacher population. Rather, all teachers should engage in the complex “process of awakening, reflecting, learning from each other, and learning how to learn for oneself about issues of oppression” (p. 82) Supporting this belief, Sleeter and colleagues (2004) state that white teacher candidates as well as all other candidates need to analyze their “social realities critically,” to engage in a “deep examination through dialogue with others, of the legitimacy of the social order (p. 82).” From this perspective, self-reflection is integral to the preparation of all prospective teachers.

Darling-Hammond, French, and Garcia-Lopez (2002) assert that transformation, through self-reflection, should not be easy or painless for anyone, regardless of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and so forth. For this reason, the process of change may take a great deal of “time, effort, perseverance, and trust” (Darling-Hammond et al., 2002, p. 3).

Perspective Three: Awareness of the Curriculum.

In this third perspective, researchers may agree that all teachers should be prepared to teach all students. However, this perspective critiques the attempts of teacher education programs who suggest they are preparing all teachers to teach all students without carefully examining

their curricular practices (Cochran-Smith, 2000). In the attempt to challenge the beliefs, assumptions, and biases of all preservice teachers, some institutions have engaged in self-studies that examine the normalized curricular and pedagogical practices of their teacher education program (Cochran-Smith, 2000). Although some teacher education programs may be under the assumption that they were preparing all teachers to teach all students, a closer look at their curricular and pedagogical practices proved otherwise.

Cochran-Smith (2000), for example, describes her experience of “unlearning racism” as a teacher educator. Despite her deep commitment to address issues of race and racism in the program, increase the diversity in supervisory staff and cooperating teachers, and send students to schools that were nearly 100 percent African American and Black, some students of color insisted that the program did not do anything to address issues of race. The following statement paraphrases some of the feelings that students of color experienced in their teacher education program at University of Penn (Cochran-Smith, 2000):

Some students critiqued their inner-city school placements, describing the inability or unwillingness of some of the experienced teachers at their schools to talk about issues of race and racism, to be mentors to them about these issues. They said we needed more cooperating teachers and more student teachers of color. They spoke of middle-class, mostly White teachers treating poor children, mostly children of color, in ways that were abrupt and disrespectful at best, reprehensible and racist at worst. Some spoke passionately about the disparities they had observed between their home schools and the schools they had cross-visited-disparities in resources and facilities, but even more in the fundamental ways teachers treated children in poor urban schools on the one hand, and in middle-class urban or suburban schools on the other. They complained that our Penn faculty and administrators were all White, naming and counting up each of us and assuming I had the power and authority, but not the will to change things. They said that the lack of faculty of color and the small number of students of color in the program gave little validation to the issues they wished to raise as women and prospective teachers of color. Many of them were angry, bitter. They spoke with a certain sense of unity as if their scattered, restrained voices had been conjoined, unleashed. (p. 167)

“Unlearning racism” according to Cochran-Smith (2000), suggests simultaneously “seeing and not seeing” (p. 185). To unlearn, signifies both growth and the undoing or reversing of the growth (Cochran-Smith, 2000). Cochran-Smith asserts the need to break down the barriers of distant academic discourse and focus efforts toward personal experiences. In this effort, the normalized curriculum of some teacher education programs needs to be looked at in order to comply with the important and imperative task of better preparing teachers to work with students of all backgrounds, cultures, ethnicities, and so forth (Goodwin et al., 1997; Knight, 2002; Siddle-Walker, 1999; Zeichner, 2003). In this effort, teacher education program must not assume that their attempt to both prepare the dominant white-middle class female population and prospective teachers of groups outside the norm is enough. Rather, they must reevaluate their curricular and pedagogical practices to ensure that their program’s desire to prepare all teachers to teach all students is reflective of the personal experiences of the prospective teachers in which they work with.

This last section examined teacher education programs’ theoretical underpinnings around critical self-reflection. The next section examines how preservice teachers engage in critical self-reflecting during their teacher education programs. To detail this further, I first describe how self-reflection is immersed into the climate of the classroom. Second, I share how teacher education programs may use student workshops to challenge preservice teachers to critically self-reflect. Third, I describe community placements as a way teacher education programs challenge their preservice teachers to experientially learn about their students and communities.

Challenging Students to Critically Self-Reflect.

One way teacher education programs may challenge their students to critically self-reflect is by creating climates and expectations where critical self-reflection and cultural critical

consciousness are part of the “routine, normative demands of students” (Gay & Kirkland, 2003, p. 184). Gay and Kirkland (2003) describe:

In our classes students are informed from the very beginning that they are expected to ‘think deeply and analytically,’ and to ‘check themselves’ about the topics they are studying; to carefully examine their feelings about what they experience; and to work diligently at translating the knowledge they are learning into instructional possibilities for use with the students they will teach. (p. 184)

Built into the classroom climate, preservice teachers regularly have critical conversations with each other about racial and culturally diverse dilemmas in education. They may share experiences from the autobiographical accounts and reflective journals written in class, discuss issues related to their student teaching experiences in communities different from the ones they may have grown up in, and/or engage in critical conversations related to literature read in class. The different discourses may provide opportunities for preservice teachers to both build camaraderie and develop a critical consciousness of backgrounds, cultures, races, and orientations different from their own.

A second way teacher education programs challenge preservice teachers to critically self-reflect is through a semester-long project dedicated to the communities within which they work. For example, “Student Workshops” developed by Checkoway (1996), is geared toward the dominant white monocultural teaching majority. The program is designed to give preservice teachers a different, more complete understand of the nature of schooling for poor, urban students (Reed & Davis, 1999). Within this program, Checkoway (1996) claims that teachers learn how to organize and plan projects such as housing reform, health care, environmental change, voter participation, and neighborhood revitalization. As an outcome of the workshop, teachers participate in hands-on activities that require problem-solving and program planning, teachers gain new life experiences by working with people from different backgrounds who have

experienced discrimination or oppression, and teachers strengthen their commitment to social responsibility and become more active community participants later in life. Through projects, such as "Community Workshops," teachers are exposed to ways of being, outside of their white, monolingual norm, and may be challenged to critically self-reflect on their own biases and assumptions around issues such as race, ethnicity, ability, and so forth.

A third way some teacher education programs may challenge their teachers to critically self-reflect is through community placements. Community placements, known as "immersion" programs, have preservice teachers live and work in neighborhoods dominated by non-white cultures (Sleeter, 2001). The goal of these programs is to put teachers in a non-white classroom while they undergo their preservice education (Sleeter & Grant, 1994/1988). Teacher education programs committed to social justice may send their preservice teachers into the field to experientially learn about their students and families. In the field, preservice teachers are asked to inquire into the lives and learning of their students and critically evaluate their own practice and school policies (Darling-Hammond et al., 2002). This may create an opportunity for white teachers to experience being with students of color for the first time in their lives, and experience that may in turn strengthen efforts for preservice teachers to experientially learn about their students and families and create culturally relevant pedagogy (Gomez, 1994; Sleeter et al., 2004).

Thus, preservice teacher may go through a period of critical self-reflection in a teacher education program committed to social justice. By challenging preservice teachers to critically self-reflect, teachers may develop a consciousness that makes injustice unbearable and thus build a commitment to teaching for social justice. If preservice teachers are challenged to critically self-reflect in their teacher education programs, possibly fostering a personal commitment to

teach for social justice, research is needed that examines beginning teachers' conception and enactment of social justice curricula in their own classrooms. In relation to my own research, it is possible that graduates of teacher education programs with a social justice stance, engaged in the demanding and pain-staking process of critical self-reflection. Given this effort, teachers may leave their programs with a desire to enact curriculum that challenges students to examine the inequities that surrounds them. Research is needed that examines teachers' efforts to enact social justice curriculum in their own classrooms.

Theoretical Orientations

In addition to critical self-reflection, teacher education programs committed to social justice may prepare teachers with theoretical tools, such as connecting curriculum to the life experiences of their students, to enact curriculum that is committed to social justice. Even as we may think that we all hold a shared belief that teaching for social justice means providing students, "with a supportive learning environment that is just, fair, democratic, and even compassionate" (Lalas, 2007, p. 17). In reality, teaching for social justice is used and interpreted in many different ways (Agarwal, Epstein, Oppenheim, Oyler, & Sonu, 2007). In reviewing the myriad of theoretical orientations surrounding teaching for social justice, it is difficult to discern places of convergence and contradiction. In many instances, terms such as democratic education, social justice, and multicultural education may be used synonymously. Lalas (2007) explains that "people are probably using this term to mean many things without actually embracing it as a perspective for educating student in urban school settings" (p. 17). As teacher education programs may differ in their beliefs around teaching for social justice and preparing prospective teachers, Lalas (2007) asks important questions related to this imperative task:

Is teaching for social justice a process of conveying a set of radical beliefs related to equity, diversity, and racial differences? Does it mean taking a political stand and

becoming a change agent in diminishing the inequities in schools? Is it a virtue? Is it possessing certain abilities and knowing certain kinds of knowledge to do certain things in the classroom that reflect equality? (p. 17)

For the purpose of this dissertation, this section highlights a few of the theoretical orientations of teacher education programs committed to social justice. Falling under the umbrella of teaching for social justice, all five theoretical orientations may carry similar tenets and/or ideas. These theoretical orientations included culturally relevant teaching, equity pedagogy, anti-racist pedagogy, social reconstructionist pedagogy, and the human relations approach. It is important to note that these are just a few of the orientations that may fall under the broad understanding of teaching for social justice. The purpose of this section is to confirm that preservice teachers in teacher education programs may be theoretically orientated to enact social justice curriculum.

Culturally Relevant Teaching.

In an effort to improve student learning, teacher education programs may ask preservice teachers to draw on the students' culture, family, and interests to create pedagogy that is culturally relevant to students' experiences within and outside of the school setting. Such pedagogy makes constructive use of the wealth of knowledge in and outside of the classroom.

Culturally responsive teaching or pedagogy builds curriculum and pedagogy on the cultural frames of reference and linguistic strengths of historically oppressed communities (Barnes, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 1990; Sleeter, 2005; Zeichner, 2003). Pedagogy that is constructed through the understanding of students' culture, background, and interests has shown to improve student learning in the classroom (Sleeter, 2005). According to Ladson-Billings (1995), there are three key elements of culturally relevant pedagogy: (1) students experience academic success; (2) students develop/maintain cultural competence; and (3) students develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge status quo.

Teacher education programs may encourage students to enact culturally relevant teaching in the classroom. For example, a private midwestern Christian university used a culturally responsive framework to pedagogically prepare preservice teachers to teach students of all backgrounds, cultures, ethnicities, and so forth (Barnes, 2006). In addition to a structured field experience, preservice teachers were asked to reflect and write personal autobiographies, engage in book discussions, create and participate in an inquiry project, and develop culturally relevant lesson plans. Additionally, time was designated for the preservice teachers to meet for a debriefing session with a professor and a graduate student prior to the end of the school day. The 15-minute session was designed to enable preservice teachers to connect, on the spot, theory to practice, thus integrating the classroom and field experience (Barnes, 2006). This is one way some teacher education program theoretically prepare preservice teachers to enact social justice curriculum in the classroom.

Once teachers leave their teacher education programs and enter their own classrooms, they may attempt to implement the theory they learned from their programs into the classroom. Teachers committed to social justice may find multiple ways to construct pedagogy that is relevant to the culture, background, and interests of their students through home visits, community work, and also lessons and activities that ask students to communicate with parents (Moll, 1992). There is some research that has examined the efforts of teachers to enact culturally-relevant pedagogy in their classrooms (Hefflin, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1995).

For example, situated within an elementary urban school, two white teachers integrated African American children's literature into their language arts curriculum in the attempt to enact pedagogy that was relevant to the lives of their predominately African American class (Hefflin, 2002). The construction of culturally relevant pedagogy was used to (Hefflin, 2002): (1) create

learning environments inclusive of the cultures, customs, and traditions of their students and (2) include lessons that assist students in making meaningful connections between their lives and school-related experiences. The teachers noted that when they worked to create curriculum that was culturally relevant to their students they also found an increase in student participation during read alouds and writing activities. Additionally, the use of culturally relevant literature triggered long, rich discussions about African American heritage and traditions.

In a second example, Benson (2003) described the efforts of elementary teachers to enact culturally relevant pedagogy in their current classrooms. She explored the pedagogy of four white elementary teachers of culturally diverse students in the Southeastern United States and examined the ways in which the elementary school teachers constructed culturally relevant practices in diverse classroom in terms of teaching approaches, strategies, activities, and lesson plans. Benson (2003) suggests that teachers must encourage successful school performance, make cultural connections with their students, and also help students to evaluate social inequities. She found that all four teachers attempted to connect what they did in the classroom to the students' lives and experiences by helping students understand themselves and others, structuring social actions, and recognizing culture as a strength to draw upon within the schooling context.

The study by Hefflin (2002) and Benson (2003) specifically looked at teachers' enactment of culturally relevant pedagogy. These studies, and the others listed in this section are important contributions to my research. Because teacher education programs are attempting to pedagogically prepare and orient preservice teachers toward teaching for social justice, it is important to understand what beginning teachers are doing in their classroom after graduating from a teacher education program with a social justice stance. The following questions emerge

for me from the research: What is the link between how teachers conceptualize teaching for social justice and their enactment of social justice curricula? How does the teacher's conceptualization of social justice inform their curricula enactments? Research is needed that looks at the contradictions and convergences between what teachers want to teach, in relation to social justice, and what they are able to teach in their current school setting.

Equity Pedagogy.

Equity pedagogy is a second theoretical orientation of some teacher education programs committed to social justice. Equity pedagogy suggests that teachers modify their teaching strategies so that students from different racial and cultural groups will experience equal educational opportunities (Banks & Banks, 1995; Darling-Hammond et al., 2002). Banks and Banks, (1995), define equity pedagogy as "teaching strategies and classroom environments that help students from diverse, racial, ethnic, and cultural groups attain the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to function effectively within, and help create and perpetuate, a just, humane, and democratic society" (p. 152). The pedagogy rests on the assumption that school structures that foster inequality must be dismantled. Therefore, this pedagogy not only enables students to acquire basic skills but teaches students to use those skills to become effective agents for social change. Banks and Banks (1995) "believe education within a pluralistic democratic society should help students to gain the content, attitudes, and skills needed to know reflectively, to care deeply, and to act thoughtfully" (p. 152). Equity pedagogy asks teachers to facilitate the learning process. Students, for example, are taught to see more than one answer to a problem and are encouraged to generate multiple solutions and perspectives. They also explore how problems arise, how they are related to other problems, and how these problems can be solved. Thus,

equity pedagogy may prepare students to conceptualize issues surrounding social justice and prepare students to be social change agents in their schools and communities.

Anti-Racist Pedagogy.

Anti-racist pedagogy is a third theoretical orientation of some teacher education programs committed to social justice. In the current climate of increasing nativism and intolerance as reflected in recent anti-affirmative action and English-only initiatives, researchers such as Kailin (1998), suggest that teacher education must incorporate an anti-racist perspective into their program to properly prepare teachers to teach in our schools and communities. She describes an anti-racist perspective as the following:

From an anti-racist perspective, the historical context of racism is structural oppression in a capitalist society. Such oppression, especially racism is not only reproduced in all the major institutions of a capitalist society, but it is also reflected in the capitalist cultural hegemony in which the cultural heritages of the subordinated groups are rendered marginal, deviant or problematic relative to the requirements of participating in such institutions. Where many multicultural perspectives look at the world from the top down, in the sense of liberal reforms of “inclusion” and assimilation, an anti-racist perspective looks at the world from below critiquing structural limitations of liberal reforms as experiences by those who are oppressed. The anti-racist perspective is a recognition of the limits of the liberal reforms, and argues for the need to go beyond the current policy approaches. (p. 82)

According to Kailin (1998), “underlying the anti-racist education is that teachers must be given the opportunity to recognize and confront racism in their backgrounds and their backyards, and to become conscious of how it is expressed in their interactions with students of color as well as white students” (p. 83). Thompson (1998) suggests that democratic education in a racist society requires anti-racist pedagogy. She defines anti-racist pedagogy as “performative spaces in which the commonplaces of racism can be unsettled-spaces in which racism can be addressed as a framing of meaning rather than as natural-while alternative possibilities are played out within the performative constraints of the classroom” (Thompson, 1998, p. 7). Anti-racist

pedagogy challenges the structural and embodied racism that exists in policy, law, common sense, and science (Thompson, 1998). In the hope to take an active stance against racism, anti-racist pedagogy is a distinctive educational response to racism (Thompson, 1998).

Social Reconstructionist Pedagogy.

A social reconstructionist approach to teaching is to prepare future citizens to reconstruct society so that it better serves the interest of all people outside of the white, middle-class norm (Sleeter & Grant, 1999). Broadly speaking, teachers working within a social reconstructionist approach seek to develop in their students, what Shor (1992) refers to as “critical thought” (p. 56). They envision a curriculum that challenges students to examine, define, and work toward a “more human society” (Sleeter & Grant, 1999, p. 190) and desire and believe that students should be prepared to question society and see through single versions of truth. In their effort to teach for social justice, social reconstructionists hope to teach and challenge students to examine the social structure of society, unpack assumptions around race, class, and gender, connect current issues to historical trends of the past, and leave with a thirst to critically challenge single versions of the truth.. As an end goal, social reconstructionists hope to prepare future citizens to reconstruct society so that it better serves the interests of all groups of people and especially those who are of color, poor, female, gay, lesbian, transsexual, disabled, or any combination of these (Sleeter & Grant, 1999). Therefore, social reconstructionist theorists envision entire educational programs to be redesigned to include the concerns of groups outside of the white middle-class norm.

Human Relations Approach.

A key tenet of the human relations approach is promoting respect in the classroom; thus, teaching students to communicate, respect, and get along with people different from themselves.

From the perspective of Sleeter and Grant (1999), the goal of this approach is to promote positive feelings around students, reduce stereotyping, and promote unity and tolerance in a society composed of different people. Important tenets of this framework include, "helping students communicate, accept, and get along with people who are different from themselves, reduce or eliminate stereotypes that students have about people, and help students feel good about themselves and about groups of which they are members, without putting down others in the process" (p. 78). Proponents of the human relations approach believe that the approach needs to be fostered in everyone, in all schools, to make our democracy work (Sleeter & Grant, 1999).

Based on the review of literature, teacher education programs committed to social justice may theoretically orient teachers to build curriculum based on perspectives such as culturally relevant teaching, equity pedagogy, anti-racist pedagogy, social reconstructionist pedagogy, and/or the human relations approach. Even as this review of literature suggests that teachers may be prepared to teach for social justice, research is needed that seeks to understand how beginning teachers conceptualize and enact social justice curricula once they enter their own classrooms.

Social Action

In addition to engaging in critical self-reflection and ascertaining theoretical tools, teacher education programs with a social justice stance may also prepare teachers to teach against the grain (Lane et al., 2003), be agents of social change (Sleeter & Grant, 1999), and/or teach to change the world (Oakes & Lipton, 2003). For this reason, teachers may examine and raise questions about the ways schooling has systematically failed to serve many students of marginalized backgrounds (Cochran-Smith, 2003). Through field experiences, self-reflective journals, and interactions with colleagues, parents, students, and community members, teachers may learn that their role is not to regurgitate prescribed curriculum, but rather to cultivate critical

perspectives in their students and reduce social inequities in their community and classrooms by enacting social justice curriculum (Darling-Hammond et al., 2002). In this section, I discuss three ways teacher education programs may encourage preservice teachers to teach for social justice and be change agents in their schools and communities: (1) recognizing and responding to injustice, (2) collaboration, and (3) teaching as inquiry.

Recognizing and Responding to Injustice.

In the commitment to prepare teachers to teach for social justice, teacher education programs may prepare preservice teachers to recognize and respond to injustices in their classrooms, schools, and communities. Even as it is essential that all students acquire the skills to read and write, some teachers may see basic skills as “necessary but not sufficient in our diverse and troubled world” (Banks, 2004, p. 298). For this reason, teachers should, “have the knowledge, skills, and commitment needed to change the world to make it more just and democratic” (Banks, 2004, p. 298). As the world’s greatest problems do not result from people being unable to read and write, teachers may work to formulate possibilities for action to make the world more democratic and just (Banks, 2004).

For example, teachers committed to social justice may create social change in and around their schools through structural changes such as detracking, access to computer science for girls, facilitating college admittance, and/or constructing after-school programs (Quartz, 2003). In the classroom, teachers committed to social justice and change create environments where students are engaged in learning that conceptualizes and transforms their understandings of social justice and students learn to collaborate in the attempt to make social change possible (Oakes & Lipton, 2003).

Through activities and discussions, teachers may work to arouse student's understanding of social justice. Most of the activities and discussions are centered on the idea that our everyday actions can either work to support or challenge various oppression and injustices related to social class, race, gender, sexual orientation, and religion (Lane, Lacefield-Parachini, & Isken, 2003). Social justice issues such as affordable housing and healthcare, rights of the undocumented, lesbian and gay marital and adoption rights, and economic justice may become a part of a social justice educator's concern for the community in which s/he teaches (Hoffman-Kipp, 2003). Through discussions and activities, teachers teach students to pose and pursue their own critical questions, to think for themselves, and take responsibility for their own education (Damico & Riddle, 2004; Merrett, 2004).

In a study of teacher practice, Makler and Hubbard (2000) engaged in a qualitative research study designed to find out how social studies teachers (committed to social justice) conceptualized the idea of justice, if and where in their curricula they believed they helped students to explore issues of justice, and what meanings their students derived from their classes. Most of these teachers taught lessons about injustice, such as the treatment of minority groups in U.S. history, treatment of women in other cultures, court cases about civil liberties, news accounts of inhuman treatment of people all over the globe. Makler and Hubbard (2000) found that teachers used a mix of whole-class discussion, small-group work, direct instruction, and highly participatory activities such as debates, role-plays and mock trials to explore controversies that exist within our country and political system. The teachers in this book, beginning and experienced, blended a powerful curriculum with the "genuine voices and needs of their students" (Makler & Hubbard, 2000, p. 103) in order to teach for justice.

Makler and Hubbard's (2000) work provides intricate lessons and/or units surrounding social justice. However, research is needed that helps teacher educators understand how beginning teachers enact social justice curricula in light of constraints such as high-stakes testing and mandated curriculum. The following questions emerge for me from the research: How do school contexts support or hinder teachers in their commitment to teach for social justice? How does each individual teacher make choices (convergences and commitments) surrounding what they conceptualize as teaching for social justice and what they can actually teach in the current context of their classroom? Research is needed that looks at the individual challenges teachers face in their own classrooms and schools as they attempt to enact social justice curricula.

Some preservice teachers of Stanford University's teacher education program in conjunction with their professor Darling-Hammond and colleagues (2002), created an anthology of personal experiences, case studies, and discussions of curriculum and teaching methods related to issues of diversity and social change. Diversity was defined as students with different backgrounds and life experiences: learning styles, interests, developed abilities, sexual orientations, and socioeconomic status. In this anthology, they documented and examined obstacles they faced in working towards social and educational equality (Darling-Hammond et al., 2002). Darling-Hammond defined learning to teach for social justice as the following:

A lifelong undertaking...it involves coming to understand oneself in relation to others, examining how society constructs privilege and inequality and how this affects one's own opportunities as well as those of different people, exploring the experiences of others and appreciating how those inform their worldviews, perspectives, and opportunities, and evaluating how schools and classrooms operate and can be structured to value diverse human experiences and to enable learning for all students. (Darling-Hammond et al., 2002, p. 201)

As Darling-Hammond, French and Garcia-Lopez note (2002), teaching for social justice requires that teachers are able to identify themselves in the relation to the world around them.

By understanding and examining the inequities prevalent within their school, community, and world they may better be able to work toward change.

In the anthology, the teachers committed to social justice, recognized and responded to injustice. As they attempted to make change, they enacted lessons that would challenged their students' understanding of issues related to social justice by providing a platform for students to discuss the inequities and injustices of schools, institutions, and society at large. The classroom teacher facilitated lessons that empowered students to work toward examining and transforming the inequities prevalent in our world. In this effort, student may develop, "a commitment to act to change the world to make it more just" (Banks, 2004, p. 299).

The work by Darling-Hammond and the preservice teachers at Stanford University (2002) contribute to my study in multiple ways. The anthology provides powerful examples of preservice teachers learning to teach for social justice, challenges that surface for student teachers, and the shared experiences of students learning to become teachers. For this reason, it seems important to understand how beginning teachers translate their understanding of social justice into practice within a context of high-stakes testing and accountability. As beginning teachers no longer have the support structures of their teacher education program, further research is needed that specifically studies the contradictions and convergences that face beginning teachers in their attempt to enact social justice curricula once they are in their own classroom.

A key component of teaching for social justice is movement towards social change. Social change can occur as we empower students to see the inequalities that exist within their personal lives, school, and society, but change can also occur at a larger scale when students

collaborate with teachers, parents, and community members to identify and remedy inequalities in the school system itself (Merrett, 2004).

Collaboration.

An important part of preparing preservice teachers to teach for social justice and work toward social change is for preservice teachers to learn to collaborate with colleagues, experienced teachers, administrators, parents, and community-members in their efforts towards social change (Jennings & Smith, 2002; Kelly & Brandes, 2001; Reason & Davis, 2005). As a community of learners, educators and community members can engage in the following discussions (Cochran-Smith, 1995): (1) build lessons and activities that examine social justice issues and ways of affecting change, (2) articulate interests, debate with peers, and work collectively with others, (3) develop social action skills, (4) form coalitions to work for economic, political, and social change within the school and community, and (5) analyze circumstances in their own lives by identifying societal injustices and developing constructive responses. Collaboration among educators, community-members, students, and parents may lead to social change within the school and community.

Oakes and Lipton (2003) suggest that social justice educators join and/or form networks with other social justice educators. In collaboration, teachers can meet and discuss ways to incorporate social justice issues into lessons, readings, community actions, and after-school activities (Oakes & Lipton, 2003). Professional communities are most helpful when they encourage teachers to learn from one another as well as provide a supportive place for teachers to share challenges and success (Oakes & Lipton, 2003).

The University of California, Los Angeles Center X teacher education program developed a way for student teachers and cooperative teachers to conceptualize and work toward

social change. The program places student teachers with cooperating teachers who also attempt to “teach against the grain” (Lane et al., 2003, p. 55). The principal at the site works as a liaison between the university and school and facilitates discussions with student teachers that challenge them to reflect on their teachings in their student teaching placement. The principal asks student teachers to do the following: question the practices of their cooperating teachers; develop strong theoretical perceptions into a practice consistent with their conception of how students learn; read literature about common pressures affecting urban schools; and reflect on how their practice was affecting their cooperating teachers (Lane et al., 2003). By teaming preservice teachers with cooperating teachers who teach against the grain, students teachers may develop as change agents during their cognitive apprenticeship in a community of practice (Lane et al., 2003).

In light of the efforts by teacher education programs, such as UCLA, to prepare preservice teachers to be social change agents in their schools and communities, many researchers have engaged in studies that support and recognize the efforts of teachers collaborating with students, administrators, and community members (Jennings & Smith, 2002; Kelly & Brandes, 2001; Reason & Davis, 2005).

Ladson-Billings and Gomez (2001) engaged in a collaborative study with teachers to help support the literacy abilities of early learners (K-2). The project, “teachers helping teachers” was formed with the understanding that teachers’ ability to create a professional community is integral to improving teaching and student learning (Ladson-Billings & Gomez, 2001). The model of collaboration served as a platform for teachers to listen to one another’s struggles and solutions and served as a catalyst for changing ways of thinking about students who experienced school failure. The discussions between teachers changed their thinking about their students and accordingly worked to change their practice for the better.

Through collaboration, teachers committed to social justice enact lesson plans that work to create change in school and society. For example, Bondy & McKenzie (1999) described the efforts of a first year teacher to build curriculum that was geared toward social action. The teacher, Jim, planned community projects with the purpose of helping students to examine the need for community service and develop a student-initiated and student-organized class project. For the first project, the students decided to do a school-based tree-planting project to beautify the campus. The students devised an action-plan, drafted letters to community businesses to solicit materials, followed up with letters and phone-calls, and had face-to-face meetings. The students worked cooperatively with their teacher to change the environment of their school and gain a sense of pride over their work. This study gives us a concrete example of the efforts of a first-year teacher attempting to teach for social justice. By collaborating with his students, Jim enacted curriculum that worked towards transformation and action.

Duncan-Andrade (2005) documents the successes of three teachers committed to social justice pedagogy. They found a formal place within their urban schools to collaborate and learn from their colleagues in their quest to teach for social justice. This inquiry group met once a week for two hours to discuss their written reflections of their own teaching, share classroom action plans, share their observations of their partner's classroom practice, share sample work, and develop out-of-classroom projects, such as academic support systems and community partnership plans. A formal meeting time each week supported these teachers in their development as social justice educators.

In working together, students, teachers, and community members may build coalitions around common causes, regardless of differences in race, gender, and socio-economic status (Adams et al., 1997). Together, social justice teaching "arouses students, engages them in a quest

to identify obstacles to their full humanity, to their freedom, and them to drive, to move against obstacles” (p. xiv). As students come to an understanding of social justice based on their previous understanding and transformations through discussions and activities, they are able to find commonalities around common injustices they have experienced and causes they wish to fight for. Those committed to teaching for social justice may engender a desire in students to transform inequalities by working for social change even in the “smallest places” and “become healers and changers of the world” (Adams et al., 2000, p. xiv). Thus, collaboration among students, teachers, and community members may create change at larger levels in the school and community.

Collaborating with students, other educators, and community members may be an important part of working toward social change. As teachers collaborate and try to create change in their classrooms and school communities, the following questions emerge for me in relation to my study. What constraints are in place that may hinder teachers from enacting curriculum that matches their conceptualization of social justice? How can teacher education programs support the efforts of beginning teachers committed to social justice? Thus, the attempts to enact social justice curriculum by beginning teachers must be documented. If we are better able to understand the contradiction and convergences teachers face in preparing and enacting such curriculum, we may be better able to prepare them for the difficult, and uncertain journey teaching for social justice entails (Cochran-Smith, 2004).

Teachers as Inquirers.

In the effort to encourage teachers to be change agents in their schools and communities, teacher education programs may prepare teachers as inquirers. In this sense, classrooms and schools serve as research sites for teachers, who are the researchers (Sleeter, 2005). Students and

teachers, together, work to solve problems that arise within their classroom and school in the hope to make the school environment a more equitable place for all students; inquiry creates opportunities for teachers to develop the perspectives on teaching, learning, and schooling that are central to social change (Sleeter, 2005). As a social justice educator, teachers may search for ways to integrate critical social justice issues into the curriculum, involve parents in the school, establish after-school activities for children, and so forth. Sleeter (2005) suggests the following ways for preservice teachers to develop as inquirers: (1) reconsider personal knowledge and experience, (2) locate teaching within the culture of the school, (3) analyze children's learning opportunities, (4) understand children's understanding, and (5) construct reconstructionist pedagogy (p. 500). Thus, some teacher education programs may prepare their teachers as inquirers.

In a self-study of their teacher education program, a private midwestern university teacher education program describes the mandatory assignment for all preservice teachers to engage in an inquiry project (Barnes, 2006). The inquiry project requires the preservice teachers to do two observations, in different grades, during reading/language arts time at a selected school. Next, the preservice teacher selects one teacher from the observations to interview about literacy teaching and learning in diverse school settings. Subsequent to the interviews and observations, the preservice teacher is asked to write a reflection in response to the interview and observation. The purpose of the inquiry project is to engage in inquiry that may help to solve problems in the classroom related to literacy. After engaging in the inquiry project, preservice teachers are asked to develop lesson plans based on their observations and conversations with the teachers used in their studies.

Knight (2000) documents the efforts of teachers, administrators, and community members to address, challenge and disrupt the, “prevailing educational inequities of children and youth found within the intersections of race, class, gender, and sexuality in schools and community agencies” (p. 170) through inquiry. Janette, a high-school English teacher, engaged in inquiry toward social change by diversifying the English curriculum to foster discussions with students who rejected the mainstream American culture and identity that was dominant in the English curriculum. By fostering a broader realm of discussion that included the thoughts and perspectives of all the students in class, the teacher was able to catch the attention of the students who were failing or as she states, “who I was failing”.

Thus, teachers, prepared as inquirers, may use their classrooms and schools as research sites to work toward social change. Through inquiry, educators may enable conditions that empower other teachers, students, parents, and community members to address inequities and work toward social change. For some teacher education programs who seek to prepare teachers to teach for social justice and be social change agents in their schools and communities, collaboration and inquiry play an integral role in preparing teachers to for social justice.

The literature review thus far has discussed the journey from teacher education to the classroom. From the literature, I am able to see that teacher education programs may be attempting to prepare preservice teachers to teach for social justice and teachers may be attempting to enact social justice curricula in their classrooms. The next section of this review discusses the numerous challenges teachers may face in their individual school contexts as they learn to teach. These challenges may stem from the urban school context in which they teach, and/or the pressures surrounding beginning teachers and their commitment to teach for social justice. For the purpose of this dissertation, learning to teach and learning to teach for social

justice have been collapsed into one section. Even as some researchers specifically examine learning to teach for social justice (Darling-Hammond et al., 2002), there is scant research that looks at how beginning teachers' conceptions of social justice translate into practice. Moreover, there is even less research that helps us to understand the challenges they may face in enacting their vision within a context of high-stakes testing and accountability. The minimal amount of research with and around beginning teachers learning to teach for social justice suggests that this literature review focus on the pressures beginning teachers face at the broader level. Within these sections, I have integrated pieces of literature and research that specifically speak to beginning teachers learning to teach for social justice.

Learning to Teach

Since the early 1900's many educators have viewed the process of learning as a transmission process where teachers transmit their knowledge into the empty minds of learners and in return, learners dutifully memorize facts and fill in the blanks (Soohoo, 1995). Today, legislation such as *No Child Left Behind* (Rodgers, 2006), continues to validate this theory through measures such as standardized testing and mandated curriculum. However, despite the efforts of legislation past and present, the transmission model has been continually challenged by progressives since the early 1900's, who view learning as constructive (Kliebard, 1995; Tyack, 1974).

To develop students' interests and prepare them to be active participants in a democratic society, Alice Chapman Dewey, a progressive in the early 1900's, developed a laboratory school in which students lived, participated, and contributed to the functioning of daily community life (Oyler, 1996). In this setting, "the child's individuality was at one end and at the same time used to enrich the social community" (Kliebard, 1995, p. 54). Such conceptions of education reject the

notion that the function of education is to transmit facts and prepare the next generation “to operate efficiently in the existing social order” (Kliebard, 1995, p. 54).

For teachers who view knowledge as constructed, the current context of high-stakes testing and mandated curriculum may create a frequent lack of congruity between what teachers want to teach and what they are able to teach. For example, Rodgers (2006) describes the efforts of Putney’s teacher education program committed to social justice. The small “reconstructionist” program is based on Deweyan principles of choice, discovery, and student-generated learning, with an underlying commitment to change the world. Graduates of this teacher education program may leave their program armed with the commitment and pedagogical tools to enact social justice curriculum, but may struggle to find space to teach for social justice in a context of standardized testing and mandated curriculum. Cochran-Smith (2004) asserts that teaching and learning to teach for social justice include:

Learning to represent complex knowledge in accessible and culturally responsive ways, learning to ask good questions, use diversified forms of assessment to shape curriculum and instruction, develop relationships with students that support and sustain learning, work with-not against- parents and community members, collaborate with other professionals, interpret multiple data sources in support of pupil’s learning, maintain high academic standards for students of all abilities and backgrounds, engage in classroom inquiry in the service of pupil and teacher learning, and join with others in larger movements for educational and social equity. (p. 159)

In this description of a social justice agenda, Cochran-Smith (2004) outlines the “knowledge, skills, abilities, and disposition that teacher need to develop to move this agenda forward” (Lalas, 2007, p. 19). Darling-Hammond, French, and Garcia-Lopez (2002) frame learning to teach for social justice as a need to understand one’s identity, other people’s background and their worldviews, and the sources of inequities and privileges (Lalas, 2007). Thus, learning to teach for social justice is seen as a lifelong undertaking that involves,

“evaluating how schools and classrooms operate and can be structured to value diverse human experiences and to enable learning for all students” (Darling-Hammond et al., 2002, p. 201). As a commitment to social justice may include a defined seta of beliefs that emphasize equity, ethical values, care, and respect (Lalas, 2007), teachers learning to teach for social justice, in and around urban school contexts, are challenged with the imperative task to design and enact curriculum that challenges students to examine and change inequities in the world around them. For this reason, my study seeks to examine how beginning teachers negotiate their conceptualizations of social justice to enact social justice curricula in an urban school context.

An Urban School Context

At this point, it is essential to understand how a commitment to teach for social justice translates into the urban school context where mandated curriculum and test preparation are common place. Recent descriptions of urban schools continue to include conditions of overcrowding, high turnover of faculty, limited resources, economic differences in salaries and supplies, dilapidated school buildings, and a greater number of students at risk for academic failure (Anyon, 1997; Gehrke, 2005; Kozol 1991; Lalas, 2007; Rothstein, 2002). As Lalas (2007) explains, “Urban schools serve a big, complex, and diverse group of students in areas marked by profound economic disparity, ethnic diversity, and higher immigrant populations” (p. 18). Cuban (2004) provides a vivid illustration of the disparities between middle-upper class and low-income schools. He shares:

In middle-class and affluent suburbs, students generally attend adequately funded schools in safe communities. These students usually have an ample network of home support-parental guidance, sufficient food, and access to books and computers, for example. Students also benefit from the services of professionals, such as tutors, optometrists, dentists, and therapists, as the need arises. Not so for low-income students in rural and urban areas. Teachers, principals, and superintendents working in low-income schools and districts face different challenges than those of their peers working in middle-class

and affluent areas. Although parents in low-income communities want the same opportunities for their children as middle-and upper-income parents do, they live in places that threaten their safety and lack the resources to support their aspirations. Moreover, schools in these areas seldom provide the minimum services that middle-class families and districts take for granted. (p. 64)

Today, one out of four American children attend school in an urban district, one out of every six American children lives in poverty, and, in urban schools where most of the students are poor, two-thirds or more of the children fail to reach even the "basic" level of achievement on national standardized tests (Gehrke, 2005). Because of the low academic achievement, mandated curriculum and excessive preparation for standardized tests may be especially common in urban schools (Sleeter, 2005). Moreover, common to urban schools nowadays is, "scripted rote-and-drill curricula, prepackaged curriculum, prepackaged lessons, standard-naming and numbering rituals, display of standards in bulletin boards, rewards and sanctions, and other forms of control on every intellectual activity are prevalent" (Lalas, 2007, p. 17). Given the context of today's urban public schools, it is highly likely that teachers may be required to explicitly follow a mandated curriculum purportedly designed to prepare students for nationwide and state standardized tests.

In addition to the disproportionate amount of students at risk for academic failure in urban schools, learning for students may be complicated with external factors such as hunger, substandard housing, poor access to health care, and instability in the family (Ferrandino, 2001; Rothstein, 2002). Within this demanding context, beginning teachers and experienced teachers alike, committed to social justice, may construct curriculum that is sensitive to the learning needs, experiences, and knowledge of each student (Chizhik, 2003) and challenges students to examine and change the inequities visible within their school, community, and world. Although teachers alone cannot transform society's fundamental inequalities, their work can "contribute in

many practical ways by raising the level of social awareness of their students guiding the curriculum for social justice instruction” (Lalas, 2007). As beginning teachers confront the challenges faced by their urban school context and/or the pressures surrounding their commitment to teach for social justice, I seek to understand how beginning teachers negotiate these challenges in order to enact social justice curricula in their urban classrooms.

Pressures Beginning Teachers Face

Beginning teachers are challenged with a myriad of questions the second they walk into their classrooms: How should I set up my classroom? What should I teach? How will I take attendance? Is there someone I can talk to? What is my discipline system? Where are my materials? These questions surface from a major learning agenda that all beginning teachers face that consists of curriculum, instruction, assessment, management, school culture, and the larger community (Feiman-Nemser, 2003). In addition to these challenges, many beginning teachers may admit to feeling desperately alone and isolated in their classroom and school environment (Conway, Hansen, & Schulz, 2004; Cookson, 2005; Feiman-Nemser, 2003). These teachers often experience, “stress, loneliness, isolation, disillusionment, and fatigue” (Brownwell, Yeager, & Sindelar, 2004, p. 175). Feiman-Nemser (2003) refers to the feelings of isolation as the “lonely struggle to survive” (p. 28).

The limitations of time may also constrain teachers from enacting social justice curriculum and/or curriculum that connects “content standards with substantive, academically rich ideas that interest them and their students” (Sleeter, 2005, p. 43). Time may also hinder teachers in finding resources to support their teaching, collaborating with colleagues to discuss planning and curriculum development around social justice issues, and managing the expectations of administration. Teachers could be faced with a myriad of time constraints such as

paperwork, conferences with parents and students, meetings, lesson-planning, classroom management issues, mandated curriculum, test preparation, field trips, assemblies, fire drills, and so forth. It is the challenge of the social justice educators to carve out space for planning within those time constraints.

In addition to the constraints of mandated curriculum, social justice educators also face the struggle of finding resources to support them in constructing lesson plans and activities, especially in large urban areas which have the fewest amounts of available resources (Maher, 2002). In our advanced seminar, beginning teachers turned to the internet, handbooks, outside organizations, libraries, university staff, and the media as support in their commitment to teach for social justice. Because their classrooms and schools may lack resources such as computers and literature related to social justice topics, beginning teachers committed to social justice may have to look outside of their individual schools to find the resources needed to support them in their commitment to teach for social justice.

This next section of the literature review will reveal some of the major challenges beginning teachers face in planning and enacting curriculum in an accountability and standardized environment.

Accountability Measures.

Accountability surfaced in the last decades of the 20th century on a state-by-state basis due to the heightened calls for high-stakes testing as a measure of student learning and achievement (Costigan et al., 2004) which consequently, became a measure of student performance as well as teacher performance. Reinforced by mandates in grade level state tests, *No Child Left Behind* asks teachers to prepare their students to perform at specific levels without the resources and environment in which they can teach well (Sleeter, 2005). For example, many

beginning teachers are responsible for preparing their students to achieve on high-stakes tests by enacting standardized curriculum with scripted “teacher-proof” lessons that may be incompatible with what their students are tested on. Costigan and colleagues (2004) note that teachers’ professional judgment is bounded by the restrictions of performances standards, assessment rubrics, and learning objectives, imposed by different educational authorities.

The “intensification” of demands placed on beginning teachers in the age of accountability are tainted with additional pressures such as: classroom management, isolation, learning curriculum, and staff, parent, and administration demands. Certo’s (2006) case studies suggests that beginning teachers are laden with challenges related to accountability issues, such as instructional pacing, test pressure, and test preparation. Thus, the age of accountability has significantly increased the demands and pressures of teachers in the classroom. In an age of accountability, it is important to understand how beginning teachers are able to enact social justice curricula, even in the face of challenges such as achievement standards and high-stakes testing.

Standardization.

Performance standards specify how well students are expected to master a given body of knowledge and skills (Sleeter, 2005). Teachers are able to mark students’ performance as inadequate, proficient, or excellent. They serve as a means of informal and formal assessment for teachers to understand what their students have learned. Content standards specify what students should know and be able to do. They describe the knowledge, skills, and understanding each student should have in order to gain a high level of competency in any given subject area (Sleeter, 2005). Feiman-Nemser (2003) argues that content standards reflect a vision of good teaching and can serve to shape conversations about good instruction. Standardization in the

consequence of standard setting that has become bureaucratized. This has led to standardized curriculum and high-stakes assessment at state and national levels (Kauffman, Johnson, & Kardos, 2002; Sleeter, 2005). Those in favor of standardization suggest that a mandated curriculum and high-stakes testing support teachers with greater certainty than their predecessors of what to teach and how to teach it. In contrast, those against standardization suggest that detailed prescription of curriculum constrains teachers from authentic and rewarding teaching (Sleeter, 2005). Research is needed that examines the ways beginning teachers make choices around what they want to teach and what they are able to teach amongst challenges, such as standardization.

Planning Curriculum.

Despite the attempts by numerous states to develop standards and implement mandated curriculum, beginning teachers may receive little or no guidance about what to teach and how to teach it once they take their first jobs (Kauffman et al., 2002). Kauffman and colleagues (2002) studied 50 first and second year credentialed teachers in Massachusetts. Their findings suggest that a standards and accountability environment served to create urgency in the teachers to raise test scores and “cover everything” (Sleeter, 2005). Even as their teacher education program prepared them with the basics of planning lessons and units, many teachers were “afforded little systematic continued development of their curriculum planning skills” (Sleeter, 2005, p. 2). Thus, many of the teachers in this study felt that their schools did not provide them with the support and/or professional guidance they needed to make informed, thoughtful decisions about curriculum content.

Even as the teachers in the study felt that they received little professional development in learning to plan curriculum, the teachers expected to find curriculum with which they would

struggle, but instead struggled to find curriculum (Kauffman et al., 2002). For example, some teachers in the study referred to the standard documents as the “thick foreign language book” (Kauffman et al., 2002, p. 275) that had to be interpreted before they could integrate standards into their teaching. For other teachers, the standard documents were too overwhelming and were left on the shelves to collect dust. For the most part, the pressure to raise test scores dictated what was taught and not taught in the classrooms. In fear that the test may cover a standard they had yet to address, the teachers commonly expressed the desire and need to move quickly from one topic to the next. To gain an understanding of what to teach and when to teach it, the teachers searched the Internet, eavesdropped on conversations, photocopied frantically, spent hours preparing handouts, and scoured libraries for materials (Kauffman et al., 2002). Thus, many new teachers may receive little guidance in what to teach and how to teach it and therefore need to be supported in learning to plan and teach curricula that meets the needs of the learners in their classroom.

Beginning teachers may also face mountains of curricula that they are asked to learn and quickly implement (Massey, 2004). Overwhelmed with the mandated curricula, they may deal with the curricula in three ways (Massey, 2004): accepting the curricula; rejecting the curricula; and asking others for help. Within these three phases, Massey (2004) found beginning teachers to experience similar battles: pressure to cover content; insecurity with teaching; attempts to add curricula given through methods courses in their teacher education program; boredom with mandated curriculum; and integration of subject areas that was not on standardized.

Regardless of curriculum or no curriculum, the environment of mandated curriculum and high-stakes testing has led to a narrowing of curriculum that may exclude student interests, authentic instruction, and the examination of critical social justice issues (Sleeter, 2005). The

studies by Massey (2004) and Kauffman et al. (2002) focus primarily on beginning teachers' experience of enacting curriculum. The following study by Bondy and McKenzie (1999) begins to elucidate the challenges beginning educators may face in learning to teach for social justice.

Beginning teachers committed to social justice may struggle to find ways to navigate through mandated curricular requirements. For example, Bondy and McKenzie (1999) tracked the first-year experiences of Jim, a beginning white, middle-class teacher committed to enact a vision of teaching for social critique, empowerment, social activism, and social justice in a black, urban poor elementary school. He developed his vision from classrooms and curricula he read about in his teacher education program and student teaching experience; however, was challenged by a schooling environment that emphasized passivity and acceptance. He was also challenged by the mandated school-wide reading program, *Success for All* (Bondy & McKenzie, 1999) that required 90 minutes every morning and constant exchanging of students from class to class. Jim found it was difficult to enact his vision for three reasons: (1) his struggle with students, whom he viewed unprepared to participate in the curriculum he envisioned, (2) his struggle with a teaching context that was not conducive to such teaching, and (3) his struggle with himself, specifically his patience with students' resistance and confidence that he could engage his students in curriculum that supported his vision. Jim was forced to make constant negotiations between what he wanted to teach and what he was able to teach. Even as Jim attempted to teach for social justice, challenges such as mandated curriculum and his own assumptions and biases surrounding the context in which he worked, hindered Jim in his efforts to teach for social justice.

Research is needed that studies beginning teachers' conceptualization of teaching for social justice and the enactment of social justice curriculum in the classroom. Even as the study

by (Bondy & McKenzie, 1999) touched on some of the constraints beginning educators may face in moving forward with their commitment, greater understanding is needed surrounding the complexities of teaching for social justice. In a context of constraints, such as mandated curriculum and high-stakes testing, research is needed that examines the ways in which beginning teachers carve out space to teach for social justice.

Beginning teachers committed to social justice may enter an urban context with a vision to “change the world” and/or a vision of social justice. However, they may often find the vision difficult to enact. These teachers may find it difficult to carve out space to teach for social justice within a context that narrows curriculum and pressures teachers to teach toward the test (Sleeter, 2005). Thus, these may feel lost, helpless, and incapable of fulfilling their commitment to teach for social justice in an environment of standardization and accountability. Like other beginning educators, teachers committed to social justice may have to negotiate what they want to teach and what they are expected and demanded to teach in their school setting. My study provides greater insight into if and how beginning teachers committed to social justice enact social justice curriculum in a context of high-stakes testing and accountability.

Conclusion

This literature review traced the field of teacher education, beginning teachers and the intersection of social justice. From this review, it is clear that teacher education programs committed to social justice may be attempting to prepare teachers to teach for social justice and teachers committed to teaching for social justice may be attempting to enact social justice curriculum. Highlighted within the literature review as well, is a description of teaching for social justice as a difficult, challenging, and uncertain journey.

After reviewing the literature surrounding social justice, teacher education, and teaching for social justice, it becomes apparent that research is needed that elucidates the link between teachers' conceptions and enactment of social justice curriculum. Moreover, research is needed that studies the negotiation between what teachers want to teach and what they are actually able to teach within a context of high-stakes testing and accountability. My study will examine how Vera, Mariam, Tanisha, and Hannah attempt to teach for social justice within their own individual classrooms.

Teaching for social justice is difficult, challenging, and time-consuming. Many social justice educators find themselves alone in this important journey. This research will share the stories of four beginning elementary school teachers in their attempts to possibly enact social justice curriculum in their classrooms. It is important for us, as teachers, researchers, teacher educators, and administrators to learn, share, and support these beginning teachers in the work they are doing in their classrooms.

III -- METHODOLOGY

In this inquiry, I explore how four beginning elementary school teachers, all recent graduates of Teachers College, Columbia University's preservice elementary education Master's program, conceptualize teaching for social justice and the contradictions and convergences they face in enacting social justice curriculum in an urban school context.

I used qualitative multiple-case study methodology in order to explore: (a) beginning teachers' conceptions of social justice curriculum, (b) if and how beginning teachers incorporate social justice issues into their practice, and (c) the supports and hindrances teachers face in their attempt to enact social justice curricula.

Tenets of critical feminist theory guided the data collection and analysis of this study. Critical feminist theory seeks to break down barriers between the researcher and participants; therefore, the responsibility of the researcher is to engage in a more personal relationship with the participants while collecting data (Bloom, 1998). Thus, this research was committed to building caring, compassionate, and close relationships (DeVault, 1999), an important tenet of critical feminist theory. In this study, the data collection methods included interviews, observations, informal chats, and collaborative group discussions. Each of these methods lends itself to discussions and interactions that may work to build close and personal relationships between the researcher and participant. These discussions will be further detailed in the data collection section of this chapter.

This chapter begins with a brief overview of the multiple-case study design and is followed by a description of the research context and participants. Next, the chapter details the data collection and analysis process, alongside the role of the researcher from a critical feminist

lens. Finally, issues of trustworthiness and reciprocity are presented as a means to understand the ethical dilemmas faced in the research.

Overview of the Research Design

To explore the conceptualization and enactment of social justice curriculum in beginning teachers' classrooms, this study employed a multiple-case study analysis. A multiple-case study approach is applicable to this study because of its detailed examination of two or more participants (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003).

I used several data-gathering techniques (five observations, individual interviews, informal chats, and five collaborative group discussions) to answer predetermined research questions. In line with critical feminist theory, the relationship between the researcher and participants is at the forefront of this research. Therefore, observations, interviews, and collaborative group discussions were conducted when and where was most comfortable for the participants. The data collection techniques provided insight into teachers' conceptions and enactments of social justice and offer detailed information about the supports and hindrances for these beginning teachers as they attempted to enact social justice curriculum in their classrooms.

The pilot of this study stemmed from an advanced seminar I co-taught with Professor Celia Oyler and four other doctorate students. Each doctorate student in this seminar engaged in qualitative research that examined how beginning teachers enact social justice curriculum. The tools, methods, and my role as a researcher are heavily influenced by my participation in the seminar and the pilot study. The interview protocol and observation template used for the pilot of this study and my dissertation were co-constructed by the members of the advanced seminar.

Context of the Study

Because building a caring, trusting relationship between the researcher and participants is at the forefront of this study, it was important for me to find a single school with four participants. Having all four participants at one school provided me greater opportunities for interaction and conversation. Accordingly, frequency in meetings and conversation led to an increase in intimacy between the participants and myself, an important tenet of critical feminist theory (Bloom, 1998; Lather, 1991).

For the purpose of the study, I specifically chose four participants who were recent graduates of Teacher College, Columbia University and currently in their first or second year of teaching. My decision to choose teachers only from Teachers College is because of my relationship with the institution and accessibility to teachers who graduated from its preservice elementary education Master's program. In close proximity to the university, is in an urban elementary preK-6 public school in Harlem, New York City. Pseudonyms and a pseudo number are used to protect the identity of the participants and the school in which they worked.

The principal of this school, a graduate of Teachers College, Columbia University, is well known for his efforts in turning P.S. 555 from a low-performing school in the city to a place where students are motivated and prepared to go to college. The majority of his efforts have been focused aligning the curriculum with standards, hiring committed and experienced teachers, engaging in professional development, and building a community. Focused on college preparation, the administration, faculty, teachers, and parents are heavily committed to preparing the predominately Black and Latino population to succeed on standardized tests.

From the perception of the teachers, the administration of P.S. 555 had a clear-cut agenda, centered on achieving high test scores and student success. As a college preparatory

school, the agenda of administration seemed to be dedicated toward providing students with the social, academic, and medical resources to be prepared and succeed in college. Among small class sizes, P.S. 555 also offers specialized programs such as: music; individual libraries for both the elementary school and the expanding middle-school; after-school sports programs; science program for the third-graders; ballroom dancing for all fifth graders; and a well-stocked science lab. Also, students are offered, optional, Kaplan-based, after-school test prep help. Moreover, a wing within the school is dedicated to free medical and dental screening. Additionally, upper-grade students are taken on multiple college visits, given their own laptops, and are provided with mentors to help them move forward in their academic and social progress. From discussions with the teachers, it is obvious that P.S. 555 and its administration seemed to have a deep desire to prepare and guide students toward success and prepare them for college. Because P.S. 555 provides me a context in which all four teachers work together, I was able to spend large amounts of time in one school and have multiple opportunities to interact with my participants.

An Empowerment School

As an empowerment school, the principal of P.S. 555 no longer must entrust decisions such as curriculum and school schedules to the district, but now carries greater discretion over day-to day decisions surrounding the school, teachers, and students. Given this responsibility, the school is still held accountable for students' progress through, "interim assessments" conducted every six to eight weeks, and "quality reviews" where "inspectors" spend two-three days in the school documenting the efforts by administration and teachers. Based on test scores, the school is given a grade from A-F. From the perspective of these four teachers, the label of 'empowerment' suggests that the principal runs everything, from the budget to the curriculum.

The Classroom

At P.S. 555, the four participants of this study attempted to teach for social justice in an urban context of racial, ethnic, cultural, and linguistic diversity. In a typical classroom at P.S. 555, of 25 students: 12 are Black (African, Caribbean, American), 10 Hispanic (Dominican, Puerto Rican, Ecuadorian, Peruvian), and three of mixed backgrounds. For the majority of the students, English is their second language. Of the 25 students, 24 students come from families who live below the poverty line, while over half of the students came from single-parent homes. Moreover, it may be common for at least one student to be homeless or in a short-term foster placement, while a minimum of four others live with or are primarily raised by a grandparent or guardian other than their parent. Approximately seven students have IEPS and over half of the class is reading far below grade level.

Although these distinctions are not readily visible, this hypothetical class was based on the participants' descriptions of their individual classrooms. In entering a classroom at P.S. 555, all students are similarly dressed in blue and white school uniforms; however, conversations with parents/teachers, free-lunch rosters, cumulative folders, and home addresses indicate the myriad of student cultures, backgrounds, and experiences. It is within this context, I documented and analyzed the convergences and contradictions teachers faced between what they wanted to teach and were able to teach as beginning teachers prepared and committed teach for social justice. Because all four teachers teach at the same school and work with a similar demographic (as described above), I do not describe their individual classrooms in an effort to not be repetitive.

Participants

As stated before, the participants of this study are recent graduates of Teachers College, Columbia University preservice elementary education Master's program. They are currently all

first or second year teachers in New York City and were invited to participate in the study based on their acknowledged commitment to social justice. For the purpose of this study, the number of years the participant has been teaching is based on the number of years the participant has been teaching in their individual classroom after graduating from Teachers College, Columbia University. Therefore, any teaching experience prior to graduation will not be accounted for in this study. In this section, I provide short descriptions of each of the four teachers. More specifically, I elucidate the details of her classroom context, my relationship with the participant, her upbringing, and her goals and aspirations as a teacher. It is important to note that these short descriptions only provide a small window into the complexities and nuances of their life, work, and/or lived experiences.

Mariam

Mariam teaches third grade at P.S. 555. Mariam graduated from Teachers College, Columbia University in Spring, 2006 and was a first year teacher when the study was conducted. Hannah, another participant, suggested that Mariam would be a good candidate for the study because of her acknowledged commitment to teach for social justice. Because Mariam fit the two main criteria of this study by being a graduate of Teachers College, Columbia University and a beginning teacher committed to teach for social justice, I invited Mariam to participate in my research.

Mariam began the school year as the general education teacher of a collaborative team teaching inclusion third grade classroom. Inclusion, at P.S. 555, refers to a class where approximately 40% of the students have an individualized educational program (IEP). When her colleague left on maternity leave in November, Mariam was moved to the general education

third grade class next door. Mariam spent the month of November decorating her classroom and building community with her approximately twenty-five new students.

Mariam arrived in the United States at the age of four from Egypt. Growing up in Brooklyn, she experienced the challenges of poverty and social inequality. Given her parents speak limited English, she was forced to negotiate the language and cultural barrier that existed between her home and school. Mariam purposively attended Teachers College to break the barrier of social inequality, and attend the best school she possibly could.

Hannah

Within the same grade level team, Hannah teaches third grade across the hall from Mariam's classroom. She graduated from Teachers College in Spring 2005. Hannah participated in the research project conducted in the advanced seminar in Spring of 2006 and graciously agreed to continue the study this year. As a second-year teacher, her third grade class consists of approximately 25 students.

Hannah was raised in a middle-class white suburb of New Hampshire. Given the homogeneity of her community, Hannah had little exposure to other races, ethnicities, and cultures. Her interest in social justice stemmed primarily from her educational experiences and travel throughout the world. By purposely putting herself in situations that were uncomfortable, Hannah gained awareness and understanding of the social inequities that existed for members outside the white, middle-class norm. She deliberately came to New York with the hope to work in urban education and teach students of various ethnicities in low-income areas.

Tanisha

Tanisha teaches fifth grade at P.S. 555. Like Hannah, she is in her second year of teaching and graduated from Teachers College in Spring 2005. Tanisha participated in the research project last spring and kindly agreed to continue with the study.

Tanisha identifies as a Black woman and grew up in both the east and west coast in pockets of poverty. Given that her parents lived separately, Tanisha was forced to switch schools every two years. Although she passed her classes successfully, her schooling experience was far from easy. Because of her treatment in school, she grew to hate it. When she asked her teacher for a letter of recommendation, she was told that she was not college material. The teacher did not suggest an alternative, or explain her reasoning she just made her point clear. At this crossroad, Tanisha could have dropped out, but her family encouraged her to move forward. Tanisha truly believed that if she did not have the support system of her family she would have never gone to college. It was her mother who proved to be the biggest influence in Tanisha's life. As a teenage mother and young divorcee, her mother supported herself through college, went to law school, and worked two jobs, while simultaneously raising two children.

As a woman of color who has seen and experienced the inequities that exist within the institution of schooling, Tanisha dedicates herself to teaching students to use their voice to question the inequities they see in this world. She hopes to prepare them with the tools and thirst to ask questions and work toward social change.

Vera

Vera teaches sixth grade at P.S. 555. As P.S. 555 pushed to expand into middle-school, Vera was hired as the only sixth grade teacher. Her class of twenty-one students was specifically selected based on their high-achieving test scores, grades, and parent involvement. I supervised

Vera during her second student teaching placement in Spring of 2006. During her placement, Vera enacted multiple lessons related to social justice issues. Because of her acknowledged commitment to teach for social justice, I invited her to participate in the study.

Vera is a first-generation White, Russian, Jewish woman and was raised in a New Jersey suburb close to New York City. Growing up, Vera felt that her family was not open to members of other races, ethnicities, and religions. Although they accepted and loved all of her friends, including her Egyptian boyfriend, there was still an issue between Black and White, especially Black and Jewish. Therefore, Vera felt the innate desire and necessity to continually reflect on her ‘whiteness.’ The movie ‘Color of Fear’ shown in her teacher education program, instigated her desire to understand and unpack her own biases and assumptions. In watching the film, she felt like the white man in the video, who says, “I am not a racist, look at all my friends”. It was this initial experience in teacher education that sparked her desire to teach for social justice.

Data Collection Process

Data for this qualitative multiple case study were collected through two semi-structured formal interviews, six formal observations, multiple informal chats, five collaborative group discussions, and a week-long classroom visit to each classroom. With the effort to engage in critical feminist research, all interviews, observations, informal chats, and collaborative group discussions occurred based on the participant’s schedule and desires. The multiple data sources provided a “wide and diverse pool of information from which to draw” (Hamre, 2003, p. 105). In this section, I first briefly summarize the data sources I utilized in this study. Next, I explain how critical feminist theory grounded the purposeful decisions I made around the collection of this data. Last, I walk sequentially through the steps I took as a researcher to document the teachers’ conceptions, and the contradictions and convergences they faced in translating their conceptions

into practice. Within this sequential walk, I intertwine aspects of critical feminist methodology to illuminate the ways in which the methods were heavily influenced by critical feminist ideology.

Data Sources

The following table marks the data sources used to answer each research question.

Table 1: Data sources used to answer questions

	Interviews	Observations	Group Discussions
What are beginning teachers' conceptions of social justice curriculum?	x		x
If and how do beginning teachers incorporate social justice issues into their practice?	x	x	x
What supports or hindrances are present as beginning teachers enact social justice curriculum?	x	x	x

Interviews.

For my study, I conducted two semi-structured, semi-formal audio-taped interviews with each participant in her own classroom. The first interview took place at the start of the school year in September (See Appendix A). The second interview was conducted near the end of the school year in May (See Appendix B). These interviews asked teachers to share their conceptions of social justice, teaching for social justice, and the supports and constraints they encountered in enacting their conception within an individual classroom and school context. Each semi-structured interview lasted approximately 45 minutes. For the purpose of this dissertation, I chose to engage in a semi-structured, semi-formal interview, rather than a

structured, formal interview. The interviews were transcribed almost immediately after the interview was conducted.

Observations.

Conducted after the first interview, the classroom observations took place between February to March 2007. Although I had envisioned formally observing approximately eight observations per teacher throughout the year, only a total of five lessons were observed (two from Vera and three from Tanisha) in a time span of two months. Even as I was available to document more lessons throughout the year, this was the only time lessons on social justice content were formally observed in the teachers' classrooms.

To provide continuity across teachers, lessons were defined as approximately 45 minute curriculum enactments planned and taught, with a clear beginning and end point (Hamre, 2003). For the purpose of this research, I defined observations as lessons enacted through curricular content. Therefore, pedagogical choices such as bulletin boards, seating arrangements, and classroom interactions were not noted in lesson descriptions. For this reason, the focus of the observations was specifically on the teacher's words and actions, as opposed to the students. Thus, teaching for social justice was documented through structured, planned for, curriculum enactments. I asked each teacher to call or email me when she felt she would be teaching a lesson with social justice content.

Collaborative Group Discussions.

Collaborative group discussions took place as an opportunity for discussion, social interaction, and collaboration among the four teachers (See Appendix D). As a group, Hannah, Tanisha, Vera, Mariam and I met five times throughout the school year for approximately two

hours. Conducted in either Vera or Mariam's classroom, we engaged in conversations related to their work as beginning teachers committed to social justice.

The purpose of the collaborative group discussions was to provide a platform for the participants to support each other in their commitment to teach for social justice. During the audio-taped collaborative group discussions, participants shared materials on social justice content, discussed ideas for social justice lessons, and shared their frustrations related to curriculum, schedules, and test prep. These conversations were transcribed within one week of the conversation.

Informal Chats.

Informal chats were conducted at all times throughout the day, lasting from five to thirty minutes. The purpose of the informal chat was two-fold: (1) to build trust and rapport with my participants; and (2) to obtain data that may be important and relevant to my understanding of the enactment observed and/or the nuances of the day-to-day experiences of beginning teachers committed to teaching for social justice. Adopting a less formal approach than the interviews and observations, the informal chats seldom followed a protocol. Rather, the conversations more often emerged from questions related to their curriculum enactments, interviews, and/or collaborative conversations. Because many times these conversations were unplanned and impromptu, they were not always recorded. Therefore, regardless of whether the chat was recorded or not recorded, I immediately went to my research journal and wrote as much as I could remember about the conversation. If the conversation was recorded, it would be transcribed shortly after I left the school.

Week-long Visits.

Given the absence of lessons on social justice content, I dedicated the month of May to spending one week in each teacher's classroom. The purpose of the week-long visit was to spend uninterrupted time in each teacher's classroom documenting everything that occurred in their classrooms. Field notes were transcribed at the end of the day.

Researcher Positionality

As critical socio-constructivist theory undergirds my assumptions in relation to the construction of knowledge, critical feminist theory closely aligns with my feelings, beliefs, and perspectives surrounding the research process. This section illustrates how critical feminist theory informed my study. Throughout this study, I attempted to engage in research that grew out of the relationship between the researcher and participant (Bloom, 1998; Lather, 1991). I dedicated myself to certain conditions of research: the desire to build close, trusting relationships with my participants; the hope to encourage beginning teachers in their commitment to teach for social justice; and the wish to learn and grow together in our conceptualization and understanding of social justice. However, I pursued this research under an important tenet of critical feminist research, the symbol of hope (Bloom, 1998). Bloom (1998), for example, suggests, "the values of representing stories of research begins with the hope of friendship, good conversation, and perhaps, with a wish for an unencumbered space where the method might comfortably reside" (p. ix). The sign of hope was a reason for me to dedicate myself toward research that was both caring and compassionate, and put the relationship between the researcher and the participant at the forefront of the research.

Even as I hoped to build strong, intimate relationships with my participants, critical feminist theory helped me to understand that these conditions and values surrounding research

methodology must also pass through inequality, disappointment, and misunderstanding (Bloom, 1998). What if I could not build a close relationship with my participant? What if my presence in the classroom became more of a burden to them than a means of support? What if conversations surrounding social justice created animosity and anger between the participants and myself rather than a place of support and growth? For this reason, it remained important for me to question the difference between the research I hoped/wanted to conduct and what was helpful, comfortable, and supportive to the teachers in this study.

Data Collection Phase

In this section, I sequentially walk through the process I took to document the teachers' conceptions of social justice and the contradictions and convergences they faced in enacting their commitments within the urban school context in which they taught. In some places, the writing may seem repetitive from the prior sections; however the purpose of this section is to give the reader a chronological understanding of the data collection process.

At the start of the school year, I interviewed Vera, Mariam, Tanisha, and Hannah. Because each of the teachers was engaged in the after-school test prep program, most of our individual interviews took place around 4:00. In the first interview, questions were asked that specifically focused on understanding how the participants conceptualized social justice and what contributed or influenced their understandings (See Appendix A).

Critical feminist research, "encourages the researcher to be restrained and listen carefully, constructing questions from what the participants narrate" (Bloom, 1998, p. 20). For this reason, I engaged in thoughtful conversation around my interview questions, rather than structured discussion limited to the interview protocol. Although my questions were guided by an interview protocol, I never felt obligated to get each question answered during the interview. Moreover,

many times a question emerged that was not on the interview protocol, but was connected to the participants' thoughts, feelings, and perspectives surrounding social justice. These impromptu conversations often emerged as nuanced, important pieces of the data. Guided by critical feminist theory, I understand that "good research" does not necessarily need to follow an interview protocol.

From the beginning of September through January, 2007, I spent approximately one period a week volunteering in each teacher's classroom. The central purpose of my volunteering was to build strong, personal relationships with my participants. At the beginning of each week I would either drop into their classrooms or send an email asking them when they would like for me to come in. I regularly told them to use me as a support system. I was available to work with students, grade papers, and/or work on their libraries. In short, I told them to use me in any way that was beneficial to them.

Critical feminist theory supports methodology that encourages the researcher and participant to gain self-understanding and "ultimately, self-determination through research participation" (Lather, 1991, p. 68). In understanding that my presence in the classroom may have created feelings of apprehension for my participants, I hoped that the significant amounts of time I spent in each teacher's classroom volunteering would help alleviate some of the discomfort connected to having a researcher in the classroom. Regardless of a researcher's "natural, unobtrusive, and nonthreatening manner" (p. 35), the presence of the researcher will most likely change the behavior of the participants (Bogdan, & Biklen, 2003). It was my hope that my volunteer efforts would serve to build rapport and trust with my participants prior to the observations.

Just as I was at the school as a volunteer, my presence was also visible as a supervisor of student teachers in other teachers' classrooms. As a supervisor, I was often at P.S. 555 conducting observations. This provided me with an opportunity to pop into the participants' classrooms for a quick hello and/or join them for lunch. Given the time I spent at the school as a volunteer and supervisor, I was sometimes at P.S. 555 every day, and always at least twice a week. By maintaining my presence, I hoped that I would encourage and stimulate conversations and lessons related to social justice.

I also met with the vice-principal on September 4th to explain that I would be working in each of the teachers' classrooms on a regular basis. By spending these months in their classroom, I was able to build stronger relationships with the teachers and also get to know the students in their class. Many times, I would stay to have lunch with the teachers. This also provided me with the time and space to build trust and rapport with my participants.

In each classroom, I seemed to serve a different purpose. In Vera's classroom, I circled the room working with students individually and in groups on math, and sometimes writing. On a few occasions, I pulled small groups of students and worked specifically with them on math concepts that would be tested the next day. Because I was routinely in their room during math, I became familiar with the curriculum and the strengths and challenges of the students in class. During lunch, Vera and I would often times discuss individual students and how to best help them move forward.

Based on her informal and formal assessments, Mariam asked me to work with a group of her "lowest" students. During this time, I would mostly read with students and work with them on comprehension strategies. Closer to the math test, I also helped students prepare for the test. In Hannah's classroom, I pulled a small group and read with them. In addition to reading, we

also did some work related to test prep. I spent the least amount of time in Tanisha's classroom because of scheduling conflicts, but did spend some time working with her students on writing.

It was during the time I spent in their classrooms, that I worked to build close relationships with the teachers. By the middle of October, I could tell that students in Vera, Mariam, Tanisha, and Hannah's classrooms were starting to feel more comfortable around me because they would often ask me to help them with their work. In Vera's classroom, I would work with a student or a group of students on a specific math concept. In Hannah's classroom students often asked me to help them revise their writing. In the younger grades, Hannah and Mariam's classrooms, I would often get big hugs when I would walk into the classroom. As I felt the students become more comfortable with me in the classroom, it was also my desire that Vera, Mariam, Tanisha, and Hannah, would feel the same. By volunteering in their classrooms, I hoped that the teachers too would begin to feel comfortable with my presence.

After each experience in their classroom, I spent my evenings documenting some of the tensions that played out as a researcher in their classroom. As I spent more and more time in their classrooms, I felt continually battled by the complexities of power and the desire to relinquish my role as an outsider. Intrinsically, I wanted to part of the camaraderie that existed among the four teachers. The four teachers were bonded by many similarities including that they all graduated from Teachers College, were beginning teachers, felt the common pressures of administration, and shared a vision to teach for social justice.

As I continued to volunteer in the teachers' classrooms through the months of November and December, the division between researcher and participant remained. Through any lens, it is impossible to deny this relationship. However, in line with critical feminist work it did seem that my relationship with Hannah, Mariam, Tanisha, and Vera was building trust and intimacy.

Through the volunteering, I was afforded multiple opportunities to talk with the teachers during lunch, preparation periods, and before and after school. For example, if I volunteered in Vera's classroom in the morning during her two-period math lesson, I would often stay during the lunch period to talk with her. Because of the regularity of my visits to P.S. 555 and their classrooms, I felt able to contribute to their conversations around students, lessons, administration, and so forth. The teachers sometimes turned to me in confidence to discuss issues related to their students, class, or school. It was these cases that suggested that they may be becoming more comfortable with my presence.

By January, I had spent nearly five months working in Vera, Mariam, Hannah, and Tanisha's classrooms. Although the component of power remained, I felt that there was a significant increase in rapport and trust between the participants and myself. It was common for the teachers to ask me for advice about a student or lesson, or invite me into their classrooms for a presentation, assembly, or party. Although I had accepted that the division between participant and researcher would always exist, the building of intimacy was important and integral to the critical feminist research I hoped and wished to engage in: research that put the relationship between the researcher and participant at the forefront of the study.

In continuing with my effort to build intimate, trusting relationships with my participants, the months of January and February were dedicated to meeting with all four participants collaboratively. In line with critical feminist theory, the purpose of the collaborative group discussions was to provide a forum for the participants and to engage in discussion around their work as beginning teachers and their commitment to teach for social justice.

Because all four participants worked at the same school, we usually met around six o'clock. The teachers hoped for a few hours to plan prior to our collaborative group discussion.

On the contrary, Vera, Mariam, Tanisha and Hannah often times still had students in their classroom when I arrived at school for our meeting. The teachers often spent hours past the test-prep program to support their students with homework, projects, etc.

Vera, Mariam, Tanisha, Hannah, and I collaboratively drafted a proposal to the principal after the first collaborative group discussion (see Appendix E). In the effort to include social justice into their schedule, they asked permission to integrate social justice content within all subject areas, and asked for ninety minutes every two weeks to teach isolated lessons with social justice content. After receiving permission, the following three collaborative group discussions were centered on exchanging ideas and planning for the lessons. Within these two-hour time frames, the participants shared ideas for lessons, battled with where and how to find time for lessons, and engaged in heated conversations related to the myriad demands placed on them by administration. As I followed the teachers' lead, I posed questions along the way that helped me to understand how their visions of social justice converged and contradicted the expectations and demands of their administration and school. Vera, Hannah, Mariam, and Tanisha, made a point to express in lengthy detail the stress and anxiety produced by these expectations and demands. Most of the time, the majority of the conversation turned more toward discussing these specific aspects related to the day-to-day realities of their job, and less to conversing about and unpacking their commitments to teach for social justice. These collaborative conversations were instrumental in helping me pinpoint the places of convergence and contradiction in the teachers' efforts to teach for social justice.

After the first collaborative group discussion, I made every attempt to document their lessons on social justice content. At least weekly or biweekly I sent an email or stopped by the participants' classrooms to see if they would be teaching a lesson on social justice content. Often

times the teachers expressed that they felt too overwhelmed to teach for social justice because of other commitments such as preparing for standardized tests, practicing for an assembly, or “catching up” with mandated curricular goals. These challenges often times constrained teachers in their efforts to move forward with their commitment to teach lessons on social justice content.

During the month of March, I was able to document a lesson collaboratively planned for by Vera and Tanisha. The lesson was connected to an Oprah Winfrey’s show. In the episode, Oprah described and shared the school she built for girls in South Africa. The lesson turned out to be a series of two lessons for Vera, and three for Tanisha. In total, I observed and documented five lessons with social justice content. No lessons were documented in Hannah and Mariam’s classrooms.

Following each observed lesson, I met with the teacher during her next open period, either lunch, prep, or after-school. During this time, I asked questions related to their enactments that helped me to understand their feelings around the lesson. It was during the informal chats, that teachers were able to articulate the invisible parts of their lessons. In this short time, teachers identified issues such as why they decided to teach the lesson, what their objectives were, and constraints they faced in enacting their lesson. Because I understood the nature of teaching and the intensity of work it involves, if a teacher could not meet with me after an observation to reflect on her lesson, I scheduled a time for another day. In addition to observations, informal chats often emerged from a quick drop into their classrooms or a conversation at lunch.

Using the words and experiences of each participant, the field notes from the observations and informal chat were transcribed within the next few days and constructed into a vignette. The teachers’ efforts to enact lessons on social justice content provided me with

important information on how teachers carved out space in an urban context of high-stakes testing and accountability.

In April, I conducted one last collaborative group discussion that explored the teachers' final ideas and thoughts around teaching for social justice. Much of this discussion was related to their feelings of teaching for social justice being disconnected from the realities of teaching.

Critical feminist theory encourages interpersonal and reciprocal relationships between the researcher and participant (Bloom, 1998). Moreover, critical feminist theory suggests that we all learn from each other. Thus, the benefit of this methodology is the richness of data that may be collected in a trusting, long-lasting relationship. These five collaborative group discussions served as an invaluable tool to build trusting and supporting relationships with these women.

Because I had documented a minimal amount of lessons on social justice content, I spent one uninterrupted week in each of their classrooms during the month of May. To better understand how their commitments of social justice bumped against the day-to-day realities of their work, I would get to the classroom before the start of the day, around 7:45, and then shadow them until they walked their students down at 3:00 and dismissed the students. Because it was the month of May, and the standardized tests were over, the teachers no longer engaged in the after-school program. If students did stay afterschool, it was specifically due to the individual teacher's desire to continue work with her students and/or provide them with a safe, and quiet place for them to do their homework.

In my observational field notes, I jotted down everything I saw the teacher do and say. Because the focus of the study was on the teachers, less attention was paid to the students. In addition to documenting their words and actions, I also attempted to document the complexities and nuances of their day. Often times, their schedule would change at the drop of a hat because

of issues such as they needed to go to the library, it was career day, or the principal came in to talk with the students. As I jotted down field notes, I also wrote questions, comments, and ideas to present to the teacher during their lunch, prep, or after-school. Through these conversations, I was able to fill in the gaps within my field notes.

In shadowing each of the teachers, I followed them as they worked with students individually and in groups, I went on field trips, I attended ballroom dancing competitions after-school, I had lunch with them, I helped them grade papers during prep, and I attended some of their collaborative team meetings. The purpose of spending these significant amounts of time in each of their classrooms was to better understand why there existed a conspicuous absence of lessons on social justice content.

In the final exit interview, conducted in May 2007, I asked Vera, Mariam, Hannah, and Tanisha to reflect on their year of teaching. Like the initial interview, I came with a list of questions to follow, but our interview seemed more like a conversation. Traveling through the school year, they identified the challenges of teaching for social justice in an urban school context of high-stakes testing and accountability.

To encourage comfort and intimacy during the interviews, I focused my attention toward the conversation, rather than the protocol. Critical feminist theory breaks down the one-way hierachal framework of traditional interviewing techniques (Bloom, 1998). Therefore, I did not feel compelled to get all the questions answered, especially if I sensed that my participant felt uncomfortable answering some of the questions. Since the central purpose of each interview was to build rapport, trust, and intimacy with my participants, interviews were purposely conducted to be interactive and open-ended (Bloom, 1998). This was the case of all eight interviews conducted.

In end, the approximately 200 hours I spent at P.S. 555 afforded me with multiple opportunities to build rapport and trust with my participants. It is for this reason I believe I gained valuable and significant pieces of data.

Data Analysis

In this section, I describe how large amounts of data collected were organized, my methods for managing assumptions and biases, and the five-phase procedure of analysis.

Organizing Data

To manage the large amount of data, I chronologically filed each interview, observation, informal chat, and vignettes under the name of each participant. There was a separate file to manage the data collected from the collaborative group discussions. Additionally, hard copies of the transcriptions and field notes were chronologically filed in manila folders labeled with the participant's name.

Constructing Vignettes.

Critical feminist research relies heavily on data collected on the lived experiences of women, as told by the women themselves (Shaw, 2004). In constructing vignettes, the words and experiences of my participants were utilized to construct windows into their classrooms. Using data collected from the formal observation and the informal chat that followed the observation, a vignette was constructed for each lesson observed. For the purpose of this dissertation, the vignettes are not displayed in their entirety; rather sections from the vignettes are used to support the major findings of this study.

Managing Assumptions and Biases.

In order to create conditions that both generate rich data and also manage assumptions and biases, critical feminist theory suggests that reciprocity must be a key element of the

research design (Gitlin & Russell, 1994; Lather, 1991). For this reason, I presented tentative themes to the participants in order to confirm that my interpretations were aligned with what they had presented to me. I also emailed the participants any vignettes or writing that related to their words or teaching. Although the participants suggested minimal changes, my writing was revised in light of their feedback (Lather, 1997).

Reflective Journal.

Critical feminist methodology encourages the researcher to engage in inquiry that is both focused on the participant and attempts to be non-judgmental of their experiences. To manage my own biases and assumptions, I kept a reflective journal with me at all times. The purpose of the journal was four-fold: (1) to reflect on biases and assumptions that emerged during the data collection or analysis period; (2) to chronicle my experiences with the participants; (3) to quickly jot any questions or ideas that come to mind; and (4) during the data analysis of this research, the reflective journal served as a chronological diary of ideas and thoughts that occurred during the research process that may not be visible in the transcripts and/or field notes.

Peer Review.

Another tool I used to manage biases and assumptions that emerged through the research process is peer review. I met with my “critical friends” (Soohoo, 1995, p. 230) approximately once a month for three hours to share my data and analysis. The writing group consisted of four doctorate students, including myself. As a requirement of the Department of Curriculum and Teaching, each doctorate student is expected to take at least one semester of dissertation seminar. In this class, we learned that we were on similar timelines and had connecting interests. For this reason, we thought it would be helpful to meet regularly to provide critical constructive feedback

surrounding our work. My critical friends served multiple purposes throughout the dissertation process, such as revising my writing and providing ongoing encouragement and support.

From the beginning seeds of this research, my writing group graciously provided me with countless hours of critical feedback. During each session, each member of the group would bring with them writing, questions, or challenges they may have faced throughout the dissertation process.

These meetings with my critical friends provided me with a place to get feedback from my group members. Prior to our meetings, I would send them data, sections, and even full chapters to review. At the meeting, we would discuss the documents sent and they would provide me with constructive feedback and questions to help me move forward with my writing. It was extremely helpful to get feedback from my critical friends as they were more removed from my dissertation research.

In addition to written feedback, my critical friends helped me work through the analysis of the data. Instead of using the meetings for written feedback, I often times asked my critical friends to assist me through parts of the data I found perplexing. While I shared emerging thoughts or ideas, they listened, analyzed and critiqued the major conclusions I planned to present in my dissertation.

Analytical Procedure

Critical feminist theory puts the relationships between the researcher and the participant at the heart of the research (Bloom, 1998; Lather, 1991). For this reason, in this study I engaged in methodology that supports beginning teachers to participate in decisions that claim to generate knowledge about them (Lather, 1991). Throughout the data analysis, reciprocity was employed as a means of supporting my participants. The participants were invited to contribute to the

analysis of the data for thoughts, ideas, or generalizations that may possibly be misrepresented (Ladson-Billings, 2000; Lather, 1991; McIntyre, 1997).

This next section of the chapter explicates the steps I took to analyze the data for this dissertation. As I detail each step, I intend to elucidate the complexities of the data analysis process. Although I distinctly separate the collection, analysis, and writing process for the purpose of this dissertation, I recognize that often times these processes are intertwined and fluid. This next section is divided into a five-step analytical procedure.

The First Phase: Initial Steps.

Through the research process I kept a reflective journal. In the journal, I marked analytical memos and themes that emerged while conducting the study. In conducting research that was critical feminist, the reflective journal served as a touchstone text as I strove to both gain entry into the field and build strong, trusting relationships with my participants. Throughout the research process, I regularly returned to the journal to explore jottings that had been written since the initial seeds of this research. As I finished the data collection and engaged in the writing of my dissertation, the journal functioned as a concrete recording of the evolutionary process I took as a researcher to explore the possibilities and realms of this research. Without the journal, I would not have a clear account of the step-by-step process I took to carefully examine and interpret the data collected in this study. The research journal proved instrumental while writing the data analysis section of my dissertation.

In addition to the journal, a major means of initial analysis occurred while transcribing the tapes collected from individual interviews, informal chats, and collaborative discussions. The purpose of transcribing the tapes was to become close to the data in “intimate ways” (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 152). Each tape was transcribed within one week of the

interview. The tapes were transcribed exactly as heard. The purpose of leaving filler words such as ‘uhm’ in the transcripts was to elucidate moments of uncertainty or hesitancy in relation to the questions asked. The transcripts in the chapters are presented in their original form; however pronouns such as “it” or “them” have been translated for the purpose of this dissertation. Therefore, if there is a pronoun in a quote, the pronoun will be followed by the inferred translation in brackets. For example the word “them” may be followed by “[the students]”. This is to give the reader better insight into the teacher’s words. In addition to the transcription of interviews, each formal observation was written as a vignette. The vignettes were composed within two days of the observation. Both the interviews and the vignettes served as initial means of analysis.

After the data were collected in June, I sat down to record my initial understandings about the research. In a two hour stretch, I typed continually. During this time, I recorded any thoughts, ideas, or questions related to the research. The reflective writing served as a place for me to document and examine initial categories and emerging from the data. In this place, I also examined my role as a researcher, including the dynamics between myself and the participants. Even before reading through the data, the challenge for these beginning teachers to understand and find the place for social justice within an urban school context focused on high-stakes testing and accountability emerged as a significant tension. As I continued through the data analysis and began to envision the construction of chapters IV and V, these initial and emerging ideas founded much of what I thought and wrote about in these chapters.

The Second Phase: Sifting through the Data.

By June, the data were collected, interviews transcribed, and vignettes written. In my effort to review the data, I read and reread the data multiple times (Marshall & Rossman, 1999).

After reading through the data, excerpts from the transcripts, individual interviews, collaborative discussions, informal chats, and vignettes, were organized into categories. I attempted to go into the data without preconceived notions, but at the same time I anticipated certain categories and patterns based on ideas that emerged from the advanced seminar, pilot study, and literature review. As I looked for categories and patterns in the data, the predetermined categories from my advanced seminar, pilot study, and literature review served as starting points.

Creating Categories.

From my doctoral seminar, I borrowed categories that emerged in relation to beginning teachers' conceptualization of social justice including: feelings of insecurity around the term social justice; a sense of urgency to teach for social justice; and understanding social justice as individual versus structural inequality. From my literature review, I searched for categories such as the ones that emerged from the research related to constraints teachers committed to social justice faced including: time; resources; mandated curriculum; accountability; standardization; and so forth. As I begin to analyze the data collected from the research, these predetermined categories served as trigger words. In finding a trigger word, the passage was highlighted and marked in the margin next to the excerpt.

After the data were read through for initial trigger words, I grouped pieces of data under the following categories: conceptions; enactments; influences; constraints; and supports. Linked to the research questions, each category was connected to a particular color. For example, all categories related to the theme "enactment" were green, while all categories related to constraints were yellow. A post-it tab of the appropriate color was labeled with the category and placed at the edge of the paper next to the excerpt. The excerpt was also highlighted. For example, if a

teacher discussed time as a constraint, her passage would first be highlighted and then marked with a yellow post-it tab marked “reference to time.”

Constructing Profiles- Exploring Teachers’ Conceptions.

After color-coding the data, I next created biographies for each of the participants. Critical feminist theory relies heavily on data collected on the lived experiences of women, as told by the women themselves (Shaw, 2004). The goal of this task was to create a window into the participants’ conceptions around teaching for social justice (Research question 1). In constructing the profiles, I used the previously coded data to create the following subheadings within each biography: background, including what informed their conceptions; their conceptions of social justice; how they envisioned enacting social justice; curriculum challenges; and their aspirations as a teacher. Then, I pulled excerpts from the data, the first and second interviews, informal chats, and collaborative group discussions, to support each of these subheadings. After each excerpt was electronically cut and pasted into the appropriate subheading, I attempted to piece together the words of the teachers. In this effort, I created a descriptive, abridged biography of each teacher in relation to their work as social justice educators.

Each biography was titled with a salient quote from the data that highlighted their vision of teaching for social justice. For example, Tanisha’s biography was labeled, “I will not let you fail,” while, Vera’s was titled “Rise up for each other.” The biographies, approximately three single-spaced pages long, provided me with a descriptive account of each teacher’s understanding around social justice. I read and reread through the biographies for words, phrases, or ideas that related to their conception of social justice, such as change, community, inequality, difference, etc (Research Question 1 and 2). After coding the data in this way, I searched through

the profiles for words that alluded to constraints they faced as beginning teachers (Research Question 3). After reading and reading the biographies, I first was able to see teachers' beliefs, ideas, and understandings around social justice individually; however, then became increasingly aware of the connections and intersections between the teachers' conceptions of social justice. Therefore, I next looked at the coding across all four cases. For example, each teacher commonly talked about time as a major constraint in her effort to teach for social justice. Connections such as these were highlighted and noted. Rather than continually reading and rereading through the immense amounts of data, I found it helpful to see the condensed versions of data and the biographies next to one another.

In thinking about the categories across the four cases, the biographies helped me connect the teachers' conceptions of social justice to each other. This process proved instrumental in helping me to begin to think about the overarching themes in relation to the findings of this research.

The Third Phase: Grounding their Conceptions.

After constructing descriptive biographies of each participant, I moved away from a descriptive understanding of their conceptions, into locating their conceptions of social justice theoretically. For this reason, I went back to data to code the data as certain orientations. To help me, I turned to major theorists in areas of social justice, urban education, multicultural education, and so forth to help me create a framework of their conception.

In reading the work of theorists such as Haberman (1995), Ladson-Billings (1994), Perrone (1998), Gutman (1987), and Sleeter and Grant (1991), I outlined the basic ideas of their frameworks and/or salient ideas from their text around teaching for social justice, urban education, progressive education, democratic education, and multicultural education. After

creating outlines of each theorist's framework, I highlighted the categories that connected from the theorists to the teachers' ideas and beliefs around social justice. For example, categories such as community building, empowerment, appreciating differences, working toward change, high academic standards were all highlighted because teachers made reference to these categories in describing their visions of teaching for social justice. These references were made within their individual interview, collaborative group discussions, and informal chats. Additionally, they also surfaced within the biographies I created for each teacher.

After highlighting the categories, I constructed a conceptual map. In my reflective journal, I put each category in a box. Categories such as caring, acknowledging and valuing differences, thinking critically, are just a few of the categories I listed. After the categories were written, I drew arrows that connected similar categories. For example, the category "empowerment" was connected to "voice". Similarly, I connected the category "respect for others" to "acknowledging and valuing differences". Last, under each category, I marked the theorists that spoke to each term. From this conceptual map, I compounded the categories into three subheadings: What did all teachers have? What did all teachers want to teach or did teach? How did they teach it? After creating the three subheadings, I cut and pasted excerpts from the data that fell into the subheadings. The subheadings were further divided by the category. For example, the subheading labeled "What did all teachers have?" included divisions pulled from the conceptual map such as high academic standards, an understanding of the inequities in the world, willingness to admit fallibility, and constant reflection. Some pieces that did not fit into a subheading and still connected to their beliefs and ideas around social justice were put into a fourth category, labeled "complexities around social justice". Last, I went back to the major theorists in the field to link the data to the literature again. Under each of the three subheadings

were: (1) the categories from the conceptual map that aligned with the subheading; (2) data that fell under each category; and (3) literature that connected to the category. I now had a clear outline that helped me to understand with data and literature, what all four teachers had, what they wanted to teach, and how they taught it. Through this effort, I could begin to see the ways that these teacher's conceptions were similar and different.

At this point, I had now moved from examining the data of each teacher individually, to a more comprehensive, holistic understanding across the four teachers. In reading and rereading through the outline, I increased my understanding around what the teachers wanted to teach and were able to teach in relation to their vision and commitments around teaching for social justice. From the outline, I created a conceptual map. Using arrows to show the path, the first box was labeled "what teachers want to teach," the second box was labeled "what teachers teach," the third box was labeled 'constraints.' By creating this conceptual map, I believed that I was *almost* ready to write.

Prior to writing, I was advised to take the fourth category, labeled complexities, and sort the excerpts by participant. Each excerpt was chronologically ordered as another form of data analysis. I went into this data with the following questions: Did anything shift over time? Were the participants static around these complexities? I marked the margins with notes that answered to these two questions. At this point of time, nothing substantial seemed to emerge from the section marked 'complexities.'

Even as I felt that my analysis was increasingly more analytical than descriptive, I continued to feel challenged by the section marked "complexities." I felt confident that I had taken the steps necessary to manage the data, such as coding, creating categories, constant reflection, comparing data to various frameworks of social justice, urban education, progressive

education, and so forth, sequencing their complexities, and creating an outline specific to the teachers and grounding it within literature. However, each time I sat down to create an outline and/or write I felt hindered to write because of the murkiness and uncertainty around this single section marked “complexities”.

Because I still felt like I did not have clear findings, I turned my attention toward taking the outline created with the data and literature, and moved in the direction of grounding the framework in theory. In reading and rereading through multiple theorists in the area of social justice, I found Sleeter and Grant’s (1999) human relations approach to be most closely aligned with the Vera, Tanisha, and Hannah’s teachers’ beliefs, ideas, and thoughts surrounding teaching for social justice. Mariam’s vision of social justice seemed removed from this approach. Even as the majority of their conceptions were aligned in some places, there appeared to be distinct differences among the four teachers’ conceptions of social justice. By grounding the outline into theory, I no longer was sharing the teachers’ words, as I did in their biography; rather, I was now making clear attempts to heavily ground their outline in theory and juxtapose their understandings against my own conception of social justice as social reconstructionism. In rereading through the data, reorganizing their framework, and recreating the outline, it was at this stage in the analysis that I had identified the strong division among these four teachers’ conceptions of social justice. The last challenge for me, before writing, was to unpack and analyze how their conceptions of social justice translated into practice.

The Fourth Phase: Gaining Clarity.

In both reading through the data and writing in my reflective journal, I still felt necessary to unpack the section marked “complexities.” I felt clear on what they teachers wanted to do and what they were able to do, however, the struggle was to understand why they could not do it. As

I read and reread the data, I came up with multiple findings such as: their constraints being only partial constraints that were created by the participants; they were ambiguous and uncertain in how to translate their conception of social justice into practice; or their conception shifted to meet the needs and expectations of the public school in which they worked. For each explanation I cut and pasted data to support each idea (both electronically and physically); however, there did not seem to be enough data to support these findings. I also attempted to write chapters on each of these findings; but, in the same way the writing felt disjointed and incomplete. Although each of these explanations partially spoke to why teachers were unable to teach for social justice, I still felt there was more to the story.

Therefore, I continued to feel challenged about what I wanted to say in regards to the complexities, questions, and ambiguities teachers had around their commitment to teach for social justice. In reading through the complexities it seemed that much of the teachers' ambiguity or uncertainty revealed in the passages listed stemmed from their visions of social justice bumping against the day-to-day realities of the school days. I understood there was a tension between what they wanted to teach and what they were able to teach, however I did not know how to explicate this tension in my writing. I turned to my reflective journal to help me unpack this tension. I wrote and wrote, read and reread, and also shared my thoughts with colleagues and professors.

My sponsor, second committee member, and writing group were critical actors in pushing me toward clarity. I was advised to read through the data again and pull the most salient findings and support them with data. In this effort, three key findings emerged surrounding the teachers' conceptions of social justice. From their perspective, teaching for social justice (1) has varied

understandings; (2) is separate and isolated from their daily work as teachers; and (3) needs external accountability. These findings will be further examined and discussed in Chapter IV.

The Fifth Phase: Testing for Plausibility.

In line with critical feminist work, the participants were invited to partake throughout the data analysis process (Lather, 1986). Understanding beginning teachers' enormous time commitments surrounding teaching, reading through emails, transcriptions was always an option, never a mandatory requirement of the study. After sending a transcription or a series of suggested themes/ideas, I would send one follow-up email asking if they had any comments, questions, or revisions. If they still did not respond, I would ask them in-person the next time I was at school. Through email, I first sent each participant the biography I had constructed of them at the beginning of the data analysis process. I asked them for feedback on their biographies. I also sent them two subsequent emails regarding emerging themes from the data and also asked for their feedback. Each participant was sent a similar email: "These are a few of the themes I am seeing from the data, please email me back and tell me what you think". I also was able to meet informally with the participants every few months. During our social meetings we often had time to quickly discuss emerging ideas from the research. Although I asked participants for feedback through emails and informal meetings, they often did not respond or felt that they did not have any revisions. They seemed to agree that the emerging themes were closely aligned with the day-to-day tensions they constantly felt as social justice educators working in an urban school context of high-stakes testing and accountability. On one occasion, a teacher asked that a portion of her biography be revised. Because pieces of the biography were used to describe the participants in Chapter III, the section was revised in light of her feedback.

Ethical Considerations

My role as a researcher, supervisor, and instructor in the doctoral seminar introduces a dilemma of power between me and my participants. Even as critical feminist methods encouraged a more interpersonal and reciprocal relationship between the researcher and the participants (Bloom, 1998), there was still the issue of power. Aligned with critical feminist theory, I understand that the unequal power relationship between the researcher and participant cannot be removed. Although I attempted to negotiate my role in the classroom as mentor, I am still there to "research." I have written the research questions, I have chosen the participants, the methods of data collection, and so forth.

To deal with this dilemma, there was the opportunity for constant negotiation of decision-making in this collaborative work (Lather, 1991). I define collaboration as an attempt to co-construct meaning with my participants through reciprocity (Lather, 1991). Fore-grounded by tenets of critical feminist research, reciprocity implies a "give and take, a mutual negotiation of meaning and power" (Lather, 1991, p. 57). In the effort to make this work collaborative, all participants were given the option to contribute in negotiating the final meanings of the research (Lather, 1991). Through reciprocity, I hoped to make this work more collaborative and engage in research that honors the voices of the participants in my study. However, guided by tenets of critical feminist theory, I understand that I cannot ignore the tensions and dilemma of power that surround my role as a researcher, supervisor, and instructor.

As I maintained my position of power as a researcher, I believe that in some ways, they teachers felt forced or obligated to come to collaborative group discussions, meet with me during their preparation periods, lunches, and before/after school, and also open their classrooms for me to observe. In addition to my role as a researcher I accept that there were many other reasons a

strong division existed between me and the participants: I was a doctorate student at Teachers College; I worked as a supervisor of student teachers in their school; and my advisor served as a mentor and professor to the teachers in the study. For this reason, even as they may have felt my study to be a burden, it is possible that they continued to participate in the effort to support me in my study. It is my strong belief that if I had not conducted my study at P.S. 555 with these four teachers, they would not have met collaboratively to plan for and discuss issues related to teaching for social justice, nor would they have enacted the small number of lessons that I documented in this study.

I do, however, feel that my presence supported teachers in managing some of the pressures related to their work as beginning teachers. In my effort to be a support system to the teachers, I was able to help them in their classrooms by leveling books, grading assessments, helping students individually and in groups, and providing ideas on lessons. In addition to helping the teachers in the classrooms, I believe that the collaborative group discussions and informal chats provided the teachers with a place to vent about their frustrations. Many times, I or the other participants would help the teachers get through these struggles.

Although I may have not been the support system needed for the teachers to move forward with their commitments to social justice, I do believe that I did succeed in building, close personal relationships with my participants. The numerous hours I spent in their classrooms and school allowed me the time to build the caring, trusting, and intimate relationship I believe contributed to the richness and trustworthiness of this data.

To engage in authentic and credible research, I built specific structures into the data collection and analysis processes. First, I attempted to position my biases and assumptions throughout the course of the study. This was accomplished by meeting with my “critical friends”

at least once a month and working closely with my sponsor, second committee member, and other faculty at Teachers College. In each case, I was often advised to review the data in order to confirm the trustworthiness of my ideas. The evolution of categories, themes, findings, and conclusions were documented in my research journal. Often times, my journal was used as a touchstone text during conversations with faculty and colleagues. In this respect, I was able to share emerging findings and have them contribute their feedback.

Second, I worked to build close and intimate relationships with my participants. This contributes to the trustworthiness of the data under the critical feminist belief that a close relationship between the researcher and participant, may provide for larger, valuable amounts of data (Lather, 1991). In addition to volunteering, I also encouraged Vera, Mariam, Tanisha, and Hannah to participate in the analysis of the data by sending them ongoing emails of emerging ideas, thoughts, and findings (as described in the data analysis section of this dissertation). Moreover, I told them at least three times, that my data (including transcripts, field notes, and vignettes) were available to them at any time they wished to read them. Also, I attempted to converse with and observe the teachers at times that were comfortable for them. Therefore, each interview and collaborative group discussion was planned at least a week in advance. If I needed to speak with a teacher, I always entered their classrooms and asked, "Is this a good time?" While they may have felt compelled to invite me into their classroom, I still hoped that my effort to be open and responsive to their feelings alleviated some of the discomfort and tension related to the researcher-participant relationship that I discussed in multiple sections of this dissertation.

Even as I hoped that my presence would support Vera, Mariam, Tanisha, and Hannah in their effort to teach for social justice, I was aware that my study may also create pressure and anxiety for the teachers. For this reason, I asked the teachers if they felt comfortable with the

study and our levels of interaction. Because of the frequency of my visits, I also watched for non-verbal cues that might have suggested that they were uncomfortable with the study. I told each participant at least two times that they had the option to leave or decrease their involvement if they were no longer comfortable with the study. In the effort to engage in trustworthy research, these were the efforts I made to build close, personal relationships with my participants.

Credibility and Trustworthiness

In this section, I delineate the methods I used to establish the trustworthiness of this dissertation research. First, the small sample size, four teachers, provided me with the opportunity to visit Vera, Tanisha, Mariam, and Hanna's classrooms often. With greater participants, it would have been difficult to manage multiple interviews, observations, informal chats, and week-long visits and also volunteer in each of these teacher's classrooms. The small number of participants allowed me to examine Vera, Tanisha, Mariam, and Hanna's understandings around teaching for social justice in more detail than if there had been a large number of participants. Second, the large amount of time (an entire school year) I spent collecting data in these teachers' classrooms adds to the authenticity of this research. Across the school year, I was able to see how their conceptions of social justice translated into practice. Third, I used direct quotations (as much as possible) to honor the voices, experiences, thoughts, and ideas of my participants. Fourth, the collection and analysis of the data were presented to illustrate the careful steps I took as a researcher to ensure the trustworthiness of this research.

Presentation of Findings

The presentation of findings appears in Chapters IV of the dissertation. Chapter IV is divided into three sections. First, I present data that showcases the teachers' varying

understandings around social justice. I pay particular attention to teachers' conceptions around teaching for social justice and how they envision their commitment to transpire into the classroom. This section addresses Research Question 1: What are beginning teachers' conceptions of social justice? In the next section, I answer Research Question 2: If and how do beginning teachers incorporate social justice issues into their practice? and Research Question 3: What supports and/or hindrances do beginning teachers face in their attempt to enact social justice curricula? I focus attention to the conspicuous absence of lessons on social justice content and the teachers' feeling of social justice as separate and isolated from their daily work as teachers. The last section of Chapter IV presents and examines the role of accountability in relation to their work as social justice educators. This section also contributes to Research Question 3: What supports and/or hindrances do beginning teachers face in their attempt to enact social justice curricula?

Limitations

The purpose of this section is to delineate the boundaries of this study. A limitation of choosing a case-study design approach centers on issues of generalizability (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, Dyson & Genishi, 2005). The decisions made surrounding the amount of participants, context, number of observations, interviews, and collaborative discussions, affected the nature of the data I collected. Although much can be learned from investigating the efforts of all teachers committed to teach for social justice, I purposely invited four participants into the study that voiced a commitment to social justice and graduated from Teachers College in the past two years. Additionally, I focused my efforts toward studying these four teachers within a single context, an urban elementary school. Therefore, the small number of participants and context

will not allow for generalizability to the larger sphere of teacher education and public schooling context.

A second major limitation of this research was due to the framing of my study. As any educational setting is overflowing with human experiences and human stories, researchers must make decisions about how to pursue their study based on their own interests (Dyson & Genishi, 2005). Dyson and Genishi (2005) refer to this as an, “act of angling one’s vision” (p. 14). In strictly focusing my attention toward social justice lessons, I was limited to documenting and examining teaching for social justice to forty-five minute increments with beginning and end points. By setting up the study this way, I may have positioned social justice as separate and removed from the day-to-day realities of their work as teachers. For this reason, social justice was positioned as doing “it,” rather, than a lens or vision by which you do everything. Thus, this angled vision evidenced in a minimal amount of lessons observed on social justice content and may be argued as a serious limitation of the study.

Although the beginning seeds of this research were centered on investigating the ways beginning teachers infuse social justice curricula into mandated curriculum and/or find the cracks, seams, and spaces to teach for social justice, there was little evidence to support this initial inquiry. Not only did my intent to document lessons on social justice content result in me “seeing nothing,” it may have also served as a burden to the teachers. By positioning social justice as doing “it,” Vera, Mariam, Tanisha, and Hannah, were limited by the study’s constraints, in that, only lessons were documented. They were also forced to call, email, or tell me when they would be teaching lessons with social justice content. For this reason, social justice may have been seen as doing “it,” separate thing from everything else.

In my effort to only document lessons on social justice content, I may have missed numerous opportunities throughout the school year to document pedagogical decisions that may have been in line within the realm of teaching for social justice. In this sense, a widened lens, may have offered me a better understanding of how their conceptions of social justice infused throughout their day-to-day work as teachers, from the read-alouds they chose, the questions that they asked during the story, bulletin boards they created, conversations they had with students, and sentences they wrote on the board. Even as all of those examples can be seen to have social justice issues infused into them, they would not be documented in my study if the teachers did not perceive them to be a lesson specifically on social justice content.

In some sense, I feel that my positioning of teaching for social justice, as lessons, may also be a cause of anxiety and stress for teachers. I believe it is in this way, my position of power as a researcher, defined for them what teaching for social justice is. The framing of this study suggests that teaching for social justice is not bulletin boards, pedagogical choices, read-alouds, and so forth because it was not documented. Thus, it could be suggested that I documented minimal lessons on social justice content partially because of the framing of the study.

This chapter specifically detailed the development of this research; the context; a description of the participants; and my research positionality. I also described the collection and analysis of the data, and explained the structure of the subsequent chapter. This chapter closed with a discussion surrounding the credibility and limitations of this research. In the next chapter, I present Vera, Tanisha, Mariam, and Hanna's individual and collective understandings around teaching for social justice.

IV – IT'S NOT THAT SIMPLE

As an elementary school teacher, I began my career in an urban school context with the desire to address and challenge inequalities within the classroom, school, and community. Even as this was my commitment, I felt unable to enact curriculum that met my vision. I entered this research with the passion and commitment to better understand how beginning teachers translate their conceptions, orientations, of social justice into tangible classroom practices.

This chapter will present and discuss Tanisha, Vera, Hannah, and Mariam's individual and collective understandings surrounding teaching for social justice. Three findings of this study are presented in order to elucidate these teachers' orientations toward social justice: (1) each teacher conceptualized social justice differently; (2) minimal lessons with social justice content were taught; and (3) accountability greatly influenced what was and was not taught in the classroom. In presenting these three findings together, I argue that despite these teachers' different understandings, they were minimally able to translate their conceptions of social justice into practice. Because there was no accountability attached to social justice, these teachers seldom if ever enacted isolated lessons with social justice content in order to focus their attention toward what they perceived as required, such as mandated curriculum and test preparation. In this effort, the conceptions of social justice they once articulated were rarely documented in classroom observations.

A Spectrum of Beliefs

In examining and analyzing the transcripts from the collaborative group discussions, interviews, and observations, it became clear over time that Vera, Mariam, Tanisha, and Hannah held varying conceptions of social justice. While their conceptions converged in minute places, the broader ideas surrounding their individual conceptions of social justice were different.

Below, I present each teacher's understanding of social justice under a separate subheading: question and think (Tanisha); rise of for one another (Vera); working together (Hannah); and rewards and punishment (Mariam). The data presented in this section will be juxtaposed against my own understanding of social justice as social reconstructionist (Sleeter and Grant, 1999). A social reconstructionist approach to teaching, "prepares future citizens to reconstruct society so that it better serves the interests of all groups of people and especially those who are of color, poor, female, gay, lesbian, transsexual, disabled, or any combination of these (Sleeter & Grant, 1999, p. 189). Even as this is the perspective I come with, this perspective was not documented within these teachers' classroom observations and interviews. Vera, Mariam, Tanisha, and Hannah's articulated visions of social justice less challenging to translate than a social reconstructionist approach (which is considered by Sleeter and Grant (1999) as the highest ideal); however, I argue that these teachers still felt hindered to translate vision into practice.

At the end of each teacher's articulation of social justice, there will be a brief discussion to analyze the places of convergence and contradiction between their four orientations. I conclude that Tanisha, Vera, and Hannah's understandings, beliefs, and values around social justice heavily leaned toward a human relations approach. Mariam's conception of social justice, however, was more in line with a meritocratic perspective of education. These perspectives will be detailed within the section.

I Want Them to Leave with That Thirst to Ask Questions

During the initial interview, I asked Tanisha to share her feelings around social justice. She explained, "I want them [my students] to leave a better human. I want them [my students] to leave my classroom thinking more." Through this assertion, Tanisha seems to have high

standards for her class (Ladson-Billings, 199) in regards to both preparing her students with the academic skills to progress to the next grade and challenging her students to think *outside of the box*. It appears that Tanisha's aim is for her students to both leave fifth grade able to critically examine what they perceive as *typical* and/or *normal*. I define "critical" as an examination and critique of the status quo.

To gain better insight into Tanisha's understanding of social justice, it is necessary to examine how her conception of social justice translated into practice. The following transcript is pulled from the first curricular enactment observed in her classroom on March 13, 2007. Given that Tanisha invited me into her classroom to document this enactment, I was under the assumption that Tanisha connected this lesson to social justice. In this lesson, Tanisha had students watch an episode of Oprah Winfrey's school in South Africa. (The episode documented the difficult challenges many of the students in the video faced in relation to the poverty, loss of parents, and other difficult variables.) By being accepted into Oprah Winfrey's leadership school, these girls believed education would change the trajectory of their lives. At the first commercial break, Tanisha said to her students:

Yes, this is about girls in South Africa, but you can relate to it. You could be their cousin. That could be your mother or sister. I just happen to be born here. I could have easily been born in South Africa. I just happen to be born here and they happen to be born there. Whether it's [in the students' lifestyles in South Africa] good or bad, that's your opinion. Ask the questions. Keep asking yourself questions and wonder why, and find out why.

Here Tanisha can be seen pushing her students to critically examine what they accept and internalize as good and bad, good being what they know and are familiar with (living in the United States), while bad is the unknown and/or different (living in South Africa). As students were asked to make connections between themselves and the girls in the video, Tanisha is seen encouraging her students to self-reflect on what they may consider normal, right, and/or typical

in a situational context internal and/or external to the classroom. Tanisha seems driven by the following belief: *if my students question more and are open and accepting to differences and new ideas, and we as individuals are part of a larger society, then individual change could lead to social justice.* Tanisha is challenging her students to examine what they may perceive as normal and/or accepted and perhaps, then, creating a space for her students to critically examine injustices in their school, community, and world around them. For example, if a student in Tanisha's class connects her life experiences to Zadwa (a girl in the video) she may begin to think about how access to educational opportunities may be strongly related to critical social justice issues such as gender and/or social class.

In order to verify that Tanisha's intention with the lesson I observed was indeed to challenge students to question their beliefs around existing dichotomies such as good and bad, right and wrong; I met with Tanisha for an informal chat after the lesson. During this time I asked Tanisha to share the main objective of her lesson. She responded:

I just wanted them [my students] to question and think. I just want them [my students] to open their mind to it [the episode]. I pointed out the outhouse and when Oprah Winfrey talked about the outhouse. The students were acting like we don't have outhouses in America and oh that's so whatever. And it bothered me because why are they saying that? Because it's different from us so it's wrong. I just want them to question what makes it wrong, because it's different doesn't necessarily make it wrong. Because we do it, because American culture does it, or you do it, or your specific group does, doesn't mean it's right, it just means it's different. Look at it, and open your mind to that.

Through the informal chat, I learned that Tanisha was connecting her understanding of teaching for social justice to the notion of question and think. This was evident in the comment, "Because it's different doesn't necessarily make it wrong." As Tanisha promoted conversation around difference, she was teaching her students to examine their own biases and assumptions around what they perceive as *different* in order to promote feelings of tolerance and acceptance in and outside the classroom.

Tanisha often used her personal experiences to promote her curricular objectives and teaching point. During the second curricular enactment I observed on March 21, 2007, Tanisha made the following assertion:

My mother raised me to have a voice and ask questions. My mother is a strong woman and you know my mother's situation, having kids as a teenager, going to school with two kids, going to law school with two kids. Don't be quiet. If someone says "Mexican kids are dirty"- ask questions. If someone says "poor kids can't learn, they're stupid"- ask questions. If someone says "Black kids are dumb"- ask questions. The whole thing about social justice is to speak out, do something about it in the world.

In order to instill in her students the importance of asking questions, Tanisha drew from her own personal experience. As she is telling them to ask questions, she is also illustrating to her students the importance of breaking down stereotypes and being critical of the world around them. Whereas Tanisha's last statement asked students to reflect on questions that may push them to examine what they individually believe, this excerpt hints toward a somewhat different curricular objective. In this statement, Tanisha was seen challenging her students to critically examine and question what others say. In both cases, Tanisha is asking her students to question and think about the world around them.

After Tanisha invited me into her classroom to observe and document these specific lessons, I was able to connect the objectives of these lessons to her beliefs around teaching for social justice. Through an analysis of the data collected from the interviews and observations of Tanisha, it became evident that her conception of teaching for social justice was centered around an interest to instill in her students the desire to carefully consider what others and they themselves believe to be true.

When I asked Tanisha to describe her conception of social justice during the exit interview, she answered:

To me, it's the kids acknowledging things, asking questions, and pushing themselves. I want them to be better people. I want them to walk away asking questions, with that thirst for knowledge. Like wanting to know more, not just accepting everything. I want them to leave with the thirst to ask questions.

To teach for social justice (according to Tanisha), then, requires that students critically examine and question the world around them. As Tanisha can be seen attempting to build a critical consciousness in her students, her understanding of social justice appears to lean toward a social reconstructionist framework that works to instill in students an understanding of social inequities related to race, culture, gender, and so forth. Even as some of the excerpts presented in this section hint toward this perspective, the data presented in this section also seems to be heavily grounded within a human relations approach that promotes acceptance, tolerance, and unity (Sleeter & Grant, 1999). As Tanisha desires her students to critically examine the world around them, she is also teaching students to break down stereotypes and be accepting of one another.

Rise up for Each Other

Vera's orientation toward social justice is grounded in the belief that her students must learn to "rise up for each other." In my initial interview with her, I asked Vera to share what she wanted her students to accomplish in terms of social justice. She answered:

What can you do to help other kids? They are sixth graders and they have been here and they already experienced what the fourth graders go through and the other grades. What advice can you give them now? How can you be role models?

As highlighted in this assertion, Vera links social justice to her desire for students to respect one another, be role models, and work collaboratively with their peers. This understanding of social justice significantly leans towards a human relations approach that teaches students to get along, rather than a vision of social justice from a social reconstructionist

perspective that encourages students to examine and transform inequities visible within the world around them.

Through this line of thinking, it is important to examine the notion of a role model versus a social activist. A role model suggests that students rise to the expectations of their school: they get good grades; follow directions; and listen to their teachers. Alternatively, students encouraged to be social activists may be challenged to: critically examine inequities within their school; communities, and world; use their voice to stand up for what they believe is right; and work toward social change. As a role model maintains conformity, a social activist breaks down and alters the status quo. As Vera desired her students to be role models for the younger grades, it may be that she believed that part of a student's responsibility as a role model was to be a social activist as well. However, from this excerpt, this connection is not visible. Rather, her focus on respect, collaboration and helping others, is highlighted in the above quote. For this reason, her assertion appears to be grounded in the following belief: *if one changes an individual's attitudes and behaviors, one is working towards social justice* (Lee, Menkart, Okazawa-Rey, 2006).

In transcripts from my interview with her, Vera further asserts her beliefs around teaching for social justice:

If you see someone treating someone wrong, say something, don't just stand there. Like use your voice. Rise up for each other...If someone puts you down, someone puts one of your classmates down you are going to be there to have their back. To just be respectful of each others differences and just be open to it and be there for each other.

In these statements, Vera specifically identifies the elements surrounding her desire to teach students to rise up for each other, including being respectful and accepting of each others' differences. Not only does rising up for one another suggest that the students respect each other and have one another's "back," but it also implies that the notion of rising up translates outside

of the classroom as well. Vera seems to be saying: *if you see your classmate or peer being treated wrong, stand up for them.* Highlighted throughout the above excerpts, is Vera's focus on individual change. Her assertions point to the suggestion that Vera believes that if one were to change the attitudes, beliefs, and values of individuals, there would be a more just society. For this reason, her conception of social justice strongly connects to a human relations approach that promotes positive feelings among students; a vision focused on individual, rather than systemic change.

A major means by which Vera pushed her students to work together and rise up for one another was through an assembly her sixth grade class presented for the rest of the school, *Life Lessons of Middle School*. During the assembly, each group presented a skit which demonstrated a life lesson they learned from their experience at P.S. 555. For example, one group presented a skit that demonstrated how one can learn from others, while another group presented a skit that discussed how important it is to be respectful to yourself, the environment, and others around you.

Vera had complete freedom from administration to present the assembly in any way she wished. Vera purposely chose the title, *Life Lessons of Middle School*. It could be assumed that Vera's assembly offered her students the opportunity to be "role models" for the younger grades (a clear connection to her previously articulated conception of social justice). For this reason, one may view the assembly as a deliberate choice on Vera's part to translate her understanding of social justice (as rising up for one another) into classroom practice.

When I met with Vera, she expressed the sense of pride she felt after the assembly. She shared, "standing up for each other, rising up for each other, being there for each other, constantly, everything that we do, like it all kind of came together." Vera's objective for the

assembly was to create an environment where students worked together and she felt her goal was met. This assertion reflects the beliefs and values Vera holds dear (as articulated in my interview with her) in relation to her role as a social justice educator.

At the end of the school year, I met with Vera to hear her concluding thoughts, ideas, and feelings around social justice. I asked her, "After a year of teaching, what does it mean to you to teach for social justice?"

I think of social justice in so many different ways and we talked about so many different things. The deepest we have ever gotten into is sticking up for other people and rising up for others. But, I don't know if you consider that social justice?

Even as Vera implied that social justice may be translated into classroom practice in myriad ways, her transcript highlights the suggestion that teaching students to rise up for one another grounds and informs her teaching practice. It may be that social justice issues such as race, gender, and poverty were pieces of her understanding and minimally discussed in class, but her assertion suggests that teaching students to rise up for one another was most discussed in her classroom. Her question, "But, I don't know if you consider that social justice?" could imply that Vera may carry with her a deeper understanding of social justice that was not necessarily documented in the interviews and/or observations or it could mean that the power dynamics between researcher and participant forced her to be insecure with her answers. In any case, her statement implies that teaching students to stand up for their peers and classmates was a significant piece of her understanding around teaching for social justice.

In the above excerpts, Vera expressed a deep commitment to teaching her students to rise up for one another; a notion strongly grounded within a human relations approach. As a human relations approach works to improve the relationships amongst the students in the classroom, Vera grounded her efforts into teaching students to work together and stand up for one another.

Working Together

Of the four teachers, Hannah's conception of social justice was most easily identified during the analysis of the data, in that, her commitment to teach for social justice was heavily centered on the notion of respect. This excerpt was pulled from my first interview with her:

I think of social justice as kind of a respect and understanding of one another, regardless of race, class, interest, sex, anything. You know, it's that basic respect for who we are as people, and I think it's necessary of us as a society, living here together...Everyone deserves to be treated equally and appreciated for their differences rather than treated unfairly because of them.

For Hannah, social justice is dependent upon a respect for others' differences. This serves as the linchpin for her teaching practice and parallels a human relations approach. Not only does Hannah want to promote a class environment where students appreciate and respect one another's differences, she also sees unity, tolerance, and acceptance as key pieces to a socially just society. This is evident through her comment, "I think it's necessary of us as a society, living here together." In this case, promoting respect and acceptance is not just applicable to the classroom but also to the outside world as well. Thus, according to Hannah, if one is teaching students to be more caring, respectful, and understanding, one is working toward social justice.

In this next excerpt, Hannah explains her desire for students to be accepting and respectful of each other's differences:

I want my students to step away with understanding that, yes, we are all different and we come from different places and we have different things that we do and say and the way we behave. But that regardless of our differences, we should all respect and treat each other fairly...I think fundamentally it is for me to teach these kids a basic understanding of respect and being able to work together, putting aside their differences as a community.

This assertion is almost identical to the previous statement presented above. Given that Hannah continues to articulate the same understanding of social justice, her orientation, then, is

directly connected to her desire to promote positive feelings among students. This is a key tenet of the human relations approach.

In this respect, Hannah is specifically teaching her students to accept and tolerate others' culture, backgrounds, behaviors, etc. When Hannah encourages her students to be fair and respectful toward each other, it is implied that Hannah wants her students to set aside their differences (such as race, class, and gender) in order to get along. Again, one can see how this thinking is heavily centered in a human relations approach in that Hannah is teaching her students to be respectful of one another in the classroom, and thus be tolerant of one another's differences.

The following transcript elucidates how Hannah's conception of social justice translated into myriad conversations she had with students in the classroom. These conversations were pulled from the one week I spent in her classroom at the end of the year. Notice the ways in which Hannah encouraged the notion of respect through these excerpts. In the first assertion, Hannah is addressing students during a mini-lesson she is teaching them on the rug:

I know sometimes we want to talk to our neighbors and we want to chat with our friends, but we have to realize sometimes that us talking isn't just stopping us from doing work, but it's also interrupting other people's time and space. It's not just one person's time, but all of our time that we have to make the most of. Respect. Your presence and everyone who is here, affect's everyone else's.

In this next statement, Hannah is preparing her students for a visit from two adults on career day:

Why is it important to face forward and give eye contact? If you don't give them eye contact does it look like I care when I look at the wall? Your eyes show others that you care. Even if you are listening it looks like you care. Giving someone eye contact really tells them you care. Why is it important to face forward and give someone eye contact? It makes you listen better and makes someone else feel like you are listening. Whether you are a teacher, student, or visitor in the classroom you give them respect by facing forward and showing them that you are listening.

Through these excerpts, one can see how Hannah expects her students to follow directions and be quiet when others are speaking. Not only is Hannah teaching her students to be respectful of others, she also seems to be implicitly teaching her students to comply with the expectations of higher authority. By presenting her notion of respecting others in this way, she is underscoring the importance of right and wrong in the classroom. For example, it is right to do one's work and not talk to one's neighbor, while it is wrong to be off task and disturb one's neighbors. As students are taught to keep quiet and do as they are told, they are also taught to conform to the larger expectations of society.

In the following statement (also taken from the one-week visit to Hannah's classroom), Hannah is dealing with a behavior issues between students at the same table:

I want you guys to think about something. Each of you at your tables work together as a table team. I have a hard time understanding why some people are bossing people at their team. Yes. There sometimes might be a leader that motivates their tables to get everything together, but nobody likes to be told what to do. We really need to think about how we can encourage each other, help, and respect each other.

Again and again, the notion of respect appears throughout the quotations. From these excerpts, it can be seen that Hannah not only wants to teach her students to respect each other, but she also wants them to be able to work together in groups as well. In each case, her teaching practice appears to be heavily centered within a human relations approach that promotes unity, tolerance, and acceptance (Sleeter & Grant, 1999).

During the exit interview, I asked Hannah to describe what she did in her classroom that could fall under the umbrella of social justice, she shared, "Working together in groups, supporting one another, reading partners, and book clubs." Evident from this statement, is Hannah's particular attention to pedagogy, in particular, grouping choices. Not only does this statement imply that Hannah encourages cooperative learning in her classroom by providing her

students with the opportunity to work in partners and groups, it can be assumed that Hannah connects cooperative learning to social justice. This perspective is not far removed from the beliefs and ideas of those who advocate for a human relations approach to social justice. For this reason, I have defined a direct link between Hannah's conception of social justice and a human relations approach. Proponents of this approach often use cooperative learning as a platform to promote positive relationships amongst students. Through book clubs and reading partners, Hannah is creating space within an existing social structure to promote "feelings of unity, tolerance and acceptance" (Sleeter & Grant, 1999, p. 77), all of which directly tie to a human relations approach.

Given that Hannah's notion of social justice is translated into practice via pedagogical choices (such as table groups and partner share), it may be inferred that Hannah understands teaching for social justice as much about pedagogy than content. Thus, in Hannah's mind, teaching for social justice was more than just lessons; it was a vision that drives many of the decisions she made in the classroom. She shared:

I think as far as my idea of social justice...it is creating a learning environment. If they can't work together and be respectful of each other inside a classroom setting, then how will they be in the school community, within their own community and their own roles in life?

For Hannah, teaching for social justice did not seem to be limited to lessons, but rather a vision that informed her practice. This could explain why no lessons were documented in her classroom with social justice content. The aim of Hannah's teaching was to build relationships between the students of her classroom, not to teach specific lessons on respect. As she expressed in the above assertion, learning to respect other's differences and working together was not only applicable to students' classroom behavior, but should transcend into the outside world as well. Hannah's excerpt speaks of this ideal: "Learning to be respectful. That's social justice to me."

That's really the foundation." Absent from this assertion and the other evidence presented in this section, is the belief that social justice is linked to societal change. Hannah seems to clearly believe that if humans are more respectful, more humane, and get along with each other better, society as a whole will be more just. In the end, Hannah's commitment to social justice appeared to be grounded in a human relations approach. She centered her efforts around teaching students to work together and respect one another's differences.

Rewards and Punishment

Articulating a somewhat different orientation, Mariam conceptualized teaching for social justice in relation to making "good decisions". Here, Mariam displays how teaching students to make sound decisions deeply informs her understanding of teaching for social justice:

I teach them [my students] that their actions have consequences. Cause and effect. What you do will cause a certain reaction from people, will get certain reactions from people. It will get you what you want, or get you something you don't want. Like that's part of social justice. That's part of what we practice here. If you want to go on a trip, you have to do your homework. If you don't do your homework, you won't go on the trip.

Mariam's comment implies that social justice is part of her practice and is translated into her practice through the notion of rewards and punishment; a vision that is strongly connected to the understanding that social justice is about individual responsibility.

This next transcript elucidates Mariam's thinking around the rewards and punishment system:

I think that's my biggest thing [reward and punishment system], I hear them say it too. I hear them say, I really want to go on a trip and then another kid will be like well you have to do your homework. I try to ask them what do you think I am going to say, if they did something wrong. They say 'no trip'. They see that now. At least they saw what they did to get them to a certain way, certain results. So maybe they won't do it next time.

As Mariam refers to the rewards and punishment system as her "biggest thing," one can see how Mariam centers her practice on a banner that teaches students to understand

consequences and comply to higher authority. For example, in the assertion, “I hear them say I really want to go on a trip and then another kid will be like you have to do your homework” shows that her students both recognize the punishment and reward system and also understand the compensations attached to compliance. Compliance leads to rewards (such as the trip), while non-compliance leads to punishment (staying at school). Mariam, it seems, is connecting social justice to the following idea: *If you make good choices, you will have good results. If one does not make good choices, one will suffer the consequences.*

The notion of conformity and how it translates into practice was documented during my one-week visit to Mariam’s classroom. Notice how the reward and punishment system comes into play:

If I do something and it’s going to get a negative reaction from somebody. If I don’t want that negative reaction then I shouldn’t do it. That’s a big concept. That’s it, consequences.

You cannot talk to me or any other adult like that. If someone touches you and your reaction is to be rude and hit back, don’t complain to me. Your reaction counts for 100% of what my reaction is going to be. If you are rude to the other person and rude to me, I am not going to even listen to you. Guess who I will listen to? Probably the other person. You have to think about now what the other person did to you, but your reaction.

Every time they do something it’s like, why would you do that? What do you think I am going to do now? What do you think you are going to lose now?

Not only do these excerpts illustrate the means by which Mariam maintained control in her classroom, but it also points to the way Mariam equates social justice to individual responsibility. In this case, students who listen and are kind are rewarded (they get attention from the teacher) and students who are rude and aggressive are punished (they are ignored). Again and again, in Mariam’s classroom, conformity is seen as rewarded, while disobedience is punished.

In this next excerpt, Mariam infused the notion of reward and punishment into even the smallest of places. In this instance, a student refused to take a practice test. Mariam acknowledged the students sitting next to the student in question (who was concerned with his table partner) by saying, "Take care of you. She made her choice." This assertion points to Mariam's constant focus on consequences and individual responsibility. Even as some advocates of the human relations approach may commend their students for being receptive and supportive of their table-mate, Mariam is seen rewarding one (the student taking the test), and punishing the other (ignoring the student not taking the test).

From these excerpts it is possible to think that Mariam's notion of rewards and punishment was the primary means by which she managed her classroom. Issues such as getting homework finished, being respectful of others, and following directions seemed to center the conversations around what Mariam considered social justice.

As Mariam directly connect this reward and punishment system to social justice (through documented interviews and observations), her conception leans toward the meritocratic belief that: *if one works hard enough and makes the right decisions one can rise in society*. This line of thinking is grounded in the assumption that all members of society have equal access to power, wealth, and income. In Mariam's case, if a student makes the right decision, such as completing his or her homework, then he or she will receive the privileges and rights they deserve. If not, he or she will lose them.

Given that Mariam articulated during the first interview (as presented in the description of participants) that she deliberately attended Teachers College to break the barrier of social inequality, it is not surprising why Mariam may be teaching her students to make *good* decisions and be mindful of the consequences of their actions. For this reason, one may see Mariam's

reward and punishment system as an effort to provide her students with the chance to be academically and socially successful so that they can overcome obstacles such as race and class. I assume that Mariam is guided by the following thinking: *if I teach my students to comply with higher authority and make decisions carefully, then I am teaching for social justice. In order to break the barrier of social inequality, one must know how to conform to the system.* Teaching for social justice, then (to Mariam), is not only about examining and transforming inequalities, but also learning how to adhere to a social structure maintained by higher authority.

Summarizing : Orientations towards Social Justice

This section illuminated the spectrum of beliefs surrounding Tanisha, Vera, Hannah and Mariam's conceptions of social justice. Even as these teachers may have graduated from the same teacher education program, each carried with her a different conception of social justice. While Tanisha, Vera, Hannah and Mariam's individual orientations toward social justice varied in some ways, these teachers did not appear to engage in conversations and/or enact lessons that suggested their orientations toward social justice significantly leaned toward a social reconstructionist approach. Given that proponents of the social reconstructionist approach are concerned with empowering students to work toward societal change, Vera, Mariam, Tanisha, and Hannah's understandings of social justice and teaching (in regards to what was documented) seemed detached from an understanding of social justice as social reconstructionism.

While these teachers' conceptions were different, they seemed to collectively regard teaching for social justice as individual rather than systemic change. Even as Vera, Mariam, Tanisha, and Hannah aimed to teach for social justice, there was little to no evidence to suggest that the teachers were teaching or hoping to teach their students to examine structural inequalities and work toward societal change. Rather, their understandings seem to be grounded in the

following beliefs: *if individuals become more critical, make better choices, stand up for one another, and are respectful of each other then the world will be more just.* Although these ideas are important to promoting positive feelings among students, they may do little to prepare citizens to work actively toward social structural equality (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Sleeter & Grant, 1999). In fact, Sleeter and Grant (1999) argue that a human relations approach often works to help students accept the status quo because the framework, "stresses mainly the acceptance of differences without necessarily examining critically which differences are of most value and which are artifacts of historic or present injustices" (p. 105). As a human relations approach promotes acceptance, tolerance, and unity, advocates of this approach believe that a primary goal of school should be to promote positive feelings among students (Sleeter & Grant, 1999). A social reconstructionist approach, however, "reverses much common sense thinking about the relationship between individual beliefs and behavior and the larger social order" (Sleeter & Grant, 2006, p. 197). While one approach purports individual change, the other asserts systemic change. Given that these teachers' transcripts did not appear to explicitly address social inequities, it could be inferred that each of the four teachers displayed conceptions of social justice that were removed from a social reconstructionist line of thinking.

For example, highlighted through Hanna's assertions is her dedication toward cooperative learning. In that, the purpose of her table groups is to improve the relationships among the students in the classroom. Even as Hannah is encouraging and teaching her students to work together, it is necessary to examine how cooperative learning is utilized. Given that cooperative learning is an imperative piece of the human relations approach as well, it seems as if Hannah's purposeful choice to have her students sit and work together in table groups is more centered around this framework. For example, Hannah may use cooperative learning to, "Process

textbooks assignments that teach about the conquest of Native American nations without ever critiquing the relations between Native Americans and whites today (Lee et al., 2006, p. 105)". Proponents of a social reconstructionist approach who see cooperative learning as imperative to students building a social network in which they can work actively toward social structural equality. Sleeter and Grant (1999) explain, "Advocates of this approach argue that individuals need to learn to organize and work collectively in order to bring about social changes that are larger than individuals" (p. 192). Cooperative learning, in Hannah's classroom, is not used to examine and work toward transforming inequities, but rather, used to improve feelings of acceptance toward other students in the class.

In a second example, even as it may be that Tanisha's discussion (as presented in the excerpt from her enactment) slightly leans toward a social reconstructionist perspective, she can be seen making an effort to reduce stereotyping and promote the acceptance of race, class, and cultural differences among her students. Her efforts to promote acceptance and reduce stereotyping are much more focused on the individual. For example, asking students to examine "Why larger proportions of children of color live in poverty than white children" is a very different than asking students to examine, "Why people may believe black kids are dumb." While one focuses on the systemic inequalities (such as access to wealth) that exist within our current society, the second question is centered on the individual (reducing stereotyping). In Tanisha's case, the evidence from these transcripts strongly points to the suggestion that Tanisha's understanding of social justice was focused more on individual rather than systemic change and thus grounded in a human relations approach.

In a third example, Mariam's conception of social justice seemed to stray from an orientation toward social justice as social reconstructionist. For example, Mariam's comment "If

you want to go on a trip, you have to do your homework” suggests that those who comply with an authority’s demands will be rewarded, while those who do not, will be punished. This assertion reminds me of much of the rhetoric around *No Child Left Behind (NCLB)*. Measures such as *NCLB* profess to raise the bar for children without critically examining the disproportionate lack of resources for groups outside the white, middle class norm. They purport a reward and punishment system similar to the one presented by Mariam: *If students are unable to pass the standardized tests, they will be held back, if a teacher is unable to adequately prepare her students for the state tests, she will be replaced, and if a school cannot meet adequate yearly progress (AYP) they will be taken over by the state.* In each of these cases, there is a clear punishment for the failure of achieving high scores. In Mariam’s classroom, the reward and punishment system works in a similar way: If you don’t do your homework you will not go on the trip.

A social reconstructionist orientation attempts to reverse these ideas, in that, advocates of this perspective work to examine and transform systemic inequities related to the unequal distribution of power, wealth, and resources. Proponents of a social reconstructionist perspective attempt to avoid testing, grouping procedures, and management decisions that may designate some students as failures (Sleeter & Grant, 1999). Within a rewards and punishment system, it is inevitable that students are marked as failures. It logically follows that if a student does not make the “right” decision and/or comply with the expectations of his or her teacher, then he or she is punished and labeled as a disappointment.

With this punishment system in place, many schools, districts, and states also attach rewards to high standardized test scores. While students may receive parties, field trips, and positive notes home, teachers and administrators may receive a bonus in pay. The focus is clearly

on individual responsibility with no attention toward the unequal distribution of wealth, power, and resources visible in our country. In Mariam's case rewards are attached to completed homework. If a student completes their homework then they can attend the field trip. It could be inferred that both Mariam and advocates of *NCLB* think in a similar fashion, in that there should be a clear distinction between right (what is rewarded) and wrong (what is punished).

Even as there may be variable ways to interpret the data collected from the interviews and observations, from a social reconstructionist perspective it seems as if Vera, Hannah, and Tanisha's efforts were primarily grounded within a human relations approach that taught students to question and think (Tanisha), rise up for each other (Vera), and respect each other's differences (Hannah). Each of their conceptions directly related to building skills that teach students to, "acknowledge and respect individual differences" (Sleeter & Grant, 1999, p. 76). Mariam's conception seemed to be grounded in a somewhat different understanding and guided by the assumption that one gets out of the system what one puts into it. This line of thinking is heavily centered within a meritocratic framework and significantly contrasts with a social reconstructionist framework that promotes social structural equality and cultural pluralism (Sleeter & Grant, 1999). Unlike Tanisha, Vera, and Hannah, Mariam's efforts seem to be primarily focused on individual responsibility, with little focus on building community, respect and acceptance within the classroom.

Teaching for Social Justice, but Outside of the Curriculum

The previous section displayed Vera, Mariam, Tanisha, and Hannah's values and beliefs surrounding social justice. Regardless of their understandings and commitments, minimal lessons on social justice content were documented. In this section, I argue that social justice was minimally documented in these teachers' classrooms because Vera, Mariam, Tanisha, and

Hannah collectively saw teaching for social justice as separate and isolated from the general, mandated curriculum.

To avoid being redundant, I have structured the next two sections of the chapter so that the quotes included in each section represent these teachers' shared orientations. Thus, it should be assumed, that the excerpts presented throughout the rest of this chapter represent a common understanding between the four teachers, regardless of whom the comment is derived from (Hamre, 2003).

It is important to point out that this section predominately presents data from Tanisha and Vera. While most of the highlighted excerpts were taken from Tanisha and Vera's transcripts, I do present small excerpts from Hannah and Mariam's transcripts that elucidate these teachers' collective understanding of social justice as a concept existing outside of the general curriculum. No evidence was collected during the interviews, collaborative group discussions, and/or observations to suggest that Vera, Mariam, Tanisha, or Hannah infused social justice content into curricula areas such as reading, writing, or math.

The following excerpt, from the first collaborative group discussion, shows these teachers understanding of teaching for social justice as being outside of the general curriculum:

Vera: ...but doing social justice, he [the principal] knows we [the teachers in the study] are going to do it [teach lessons with social justice content]. It is a great way to force it [teaching for social justice] now and to say this [teaching for social justice] is our commitment and to say this is what we are going to do. Are you okay with one period? Tanisha: I would feel like it would be good if we had one period a week or every other week allotted to that [lessons on social justice]. So, this is something we are definitely going to do. So they can look forward to that [lessons on social justice], we have something structured, planned...We have this definite thing that we are going to do and talk it out.

This exchange between Vera and Tanisha highlights an important issue regarding teaching for social justice. Displayed in these transcripts is not only the commitment to teach for

social justice, but the shared perception that structured time is needed outside of the general curricula areas in order to translate their vision into practice. Vera's comment, "this is our commitment," points to the directed desire to teach for social justice. However, her belief that social justice is separate and outside of the general curriculum is heard in the following statement, "he knows we are going to do it." By claiming she is going to be "doing it," seems to imply that these teachers perceive teaching for social justice as something different, special, and compartmentalized from their daily work as teachers. In this respect, it can be assumed that these teachers are finding ways to carve out space to teach for social justice, rather than infusing social justice content into the regular curricular content.

Tanisha's sentiments appear to echo Vera's in that both teachers appear to need specific time designated to enacting lessons on social justice. Tanisha's next comment, however, implies a more significant issue than simply asking for time outside of her regularly scheduled class time. She asserted, "So, this is something we are definitely going to do. So they can look forward to that, we have something structured, planned. Based on this statement, it's almost as though Tanisha is saying: *If we have this structured time, specifically allotted to lessons on social justice, then it will happen. If there is not a time designated specifically toward social justice then it will not happen.* For this reason, there appears to be a distinction between Vera and Tanisha's desire to teach for social justice and teaching for social justice in actuality. As these teachers need and hoped for time outside of their daily schedule to teach for social justice, they simultaneously recognized that their daily schedule (as is) had no place for social justice. Thus, structured time avails them an opportunity to teach for social justice.

In order to gain permission from the principal to replace the general curriculum with isolated lessons on social justice content, the teachers and I drafted a proposal to the principal in

January (no lesson with social justice content had yet been taught). The following transcript is an excerpt from the letter (see Appendix F):

In order to enact social justice curricula in our classrooms, we ask that we can have two periods every other week to teach social justice during the social studies period.

By constructing the letter, the teachers were indeed trying to carve out space to teach for social justice. An important benefit of asking for time is that these teachers were given the opportunity to teach isolated lessons on social justice content during the social studies period. In this regard, one can see again that Vera, Mariam, Tanisha, and Hannah were not asking to infuse social justice content into the social studies curriculum; rather they were hoping to replace one with the other.

Thus, Vera's, Mariam's, Tanisha's, and Hannah's understandings of social justice are more in line with an additive, rather than a social reconstructionist approach to teaching for social justice. In an additive approach, a teacher directly puts social justice content, "into the curriculum without restructuring it, which takes substantial time, effort, training, and rethinking of the curriculum and its purposes, nature, and goals" (Lee et al., 2006, p. 37-38). For example, a teacher may engage students in a lesson that examines the unequal distribution of wealth (using chairs to symbolize percentages of people). Even as a student may gain deeper insight into the inequities of society, the teacher purposely set aside the mandated social studies unit on India in order to teach this lesson. In contrast, a teacher grounded in a social reconstructionist approach works to reshape an educational program so that the curriculum includes students' life experiences as a starting point for analyzing oppression, an analysis of alternative view point, and the teaching of social action skills. (Sleeter & Grant, 1999). For example, this teacher may use a comparable activity to instill in her students an understanding of the unequal distribution of wealth, but link the activity to the caste system in India. After engaging in a discussion around

the caste system, the teacher may generate responses from her students that challenge them to think about disparities visible in their community (such as wealth, power, education, and so forth). Whereas an additive approach requires that teachers carve out space to teach for social justice, a social reconstructionist framework mandates the rethinking and restructuring of the general curriculum.

Grounded in an additive approach, these teachers felt it necessary to carve out space to teach for social justice within a schedule that may already have been full with curriculum mandates, instead of infusing social justice content into their daily work as teachers. Even as these teachers were granted the permission to replace social studies with social justice lessons, no lessons with social justice content were documented throughout the month of February.

In the second collaborative group discussion, Tanisha explained why she was not able to begin lessons with social justice content. She articulated during the collaborative group discussion, “I might not be able to start [teaching social justice content] right away because we have to do something in social studies and I have to do this Mexico thing and so we have to set it up because we are going to be observed in social studies.” To support her decision she adds, “I just want to be able to finish things [the unit on Mexico] I have lined up to show her [the vice-principal] by the time she has the post-conference with me.” It can be inferred that Tanisha purposely postponed her commitment to teach for social justice in order to enact a unit on Mexico, but did not try to integrate the expectations of the administration with her own commitment to social justice. Even if the administration planned to formally observe a social studies lesson, was it not possible to infuse social justice content a lesson on Mexico? For Tanisha, this was not the case. Rather, according to her, the lesson on Mexico needed to take precedence over her own commitment to teach for social justice.

In the same collaborative group discussion, Tanisha informed her colleagues of the inherent challenges of teaching for social justice: “She [the vice-principal] will come in, see what you are working on, and ask, ‘What is your culminating point?’” In this case, Tanisha’s transcript hints towards the suggestion that administrative expectations (preparing lessons with a clear teaching point) may hinder Tanisha in moving forward with her commitment to teach for social justice. Based on the excerpt, it can be inferred that Tanisha felt capable of designing a social studies lesson that adhered to the expectations of administration, but did not know how to merge her commitment to social justice with these expectations. It logically follows that while these teachers may be able to teach reading, writing, math, social studies, and/or science lessons that meets the expectations of the administration (connects to the standards, have clear teaching points, and follow a pacing calendar), they may lack the confidence and ability to do so through lessons that integrate social justice content.

Tanisha (as presented in the last section) wanted her students to leave the classroom with, “a thirst to ask questions”. As Tanisha is expected from the administration to teach a social studies lesson on Mexico, she could have engaged her students in conversations that focused on their assumptions and beliefs about people living outside of America, specifically Mexican people. This lesson may have complemented the lesson she taught on Oprah Winfrey’s school in South Africa (as discussed in the previous section) where she desired that her students examine what they accept and internalize as normal and/or right. As her understanding of social justice is grounded within a human relations approach, this perspective is less complex than a conception of social justice as social reconstructionism. Even though a human relations approach to social justice does not require that Tanisha engage with her students in deeper level conversations around critical social justice issues such as housing discrimination and the lack of decent paying

jobs, it is significant that Tanisha did not feel that she could not translate this conception of social justice into her lessons and meet administrative demands; instead she felt the need to treat the two notions as separate.

In the same collaborative group discussion, Hannah suggested that Tanisha teach a lesson on social justice content for her formal social studies observation. Tanisha explained that she preferred to “just” teach social studies. She shared, “I would rather explain this [a social studies lesson] to the principal, because he is going to ask what are the standards, and so forth, and I can’t really explain it [a social justice lesson].” From Tanisha’s perspective, teaching for social justice seems to be disconnected from the standards, misaligned with any other administrative expectations, and a separate entity that appears to trail behind mandated curricular commitments.

By suggesting to Tanisha that she replace her social studies lesson with a social justice lesson, Hannah likewise does not see how the two content areas can be merged. Again as these teachers continue to regard teaching for social justice as something special, different, and outside of the general curriculum, it logically follows that it may be more efficient/plausible to incorporate the two notions together (social justice and mandated curriculum) given that these teachers do not perceive the demands and expectations of administration to be aligned with their commitment to social justice.

Within the months of March and early April, two lessons were documented in Vera’s classroom and three in Tanisha’s in classroom. The two teachers collaboratively planned for these lessons. Vera and Tanisha’s *social justice* lessons were based on an episode of Oprah Winfrey’s talkshow. In the episode, Oprah discussed the school she built for girls in South Africa (As mentioned earlier during the presentation of Tanisha’s conception of social justice).

Here I pull an excerpt from the first lesson documented in Vera' classroom on April 23, 2007:

Using the tape of Oprah's program, Building a Dream, Vera sets aside ninety minutes, two periods of the day to watch and discuss issues related to the tape. A divergence from the regular schedule, currently consisting of five periods of math (in preparation for the state test), Vera sets her expectations right from the start, "I think it is important to watch this and learn about social justice issues. If we cannot handle watching the video, we will do our regular math." As she turns on the video, the class moves their seats to sit closer to the television.

This excerpt not only highlights Vera's attempt to teach for social justice within a structure that is already full with test preparation, but is also reflective of the particular school structure and the focus/stress of students success on standardized tests. Even as Vera made every attempt to follow through with her commitment to teach for social justice, the lesson necessitated time outside of the general curriculum. Not only does Vera insist that she must make time outside of her regular schedule to teach for social justice, she communicates this notion to her students as well. Her comment, "If we cannot handle watching the video, we will do our regular math" suggests that the social justice lesson was something special and different than what was normally taught in the classroom. In this sense, it seems as though lessons on social justice are a privilege for her students, rather than a necessary and fundamental means of preparing them to examine and transform the social inequities within our society at large.

In the second lesson (documented on March 29, 2007), Vera built upon the conversations she started in the first lesson one month prior. Like the first lesson, Vera replaced social studies with her social justice lesson. There was no conversation to suggest that she could and/or wanted to integrate the two. In the effort to elicit conversation related to the previously viewed video, Vera said the following:

They all [the girls attending Oprah's school] have people to encourage them, faith in themselves, courage, confidence, and determination, but think about the things that are

going against them. What do you think about people who have less than you? Do you appreciate what you have?

Here is a piece of Vera's understanding around social justice that was not highlighted in the section that presented her conception of social justice. Even though this excerpt does not directly connect to her overarching conception of social justice as "rise up for others" this piece of her understanding is still heavily grounded within a human relations approach; Vera's focus is on individual change rather than systemic change. While Vera's questions may engage her students in a conversation around accepting others and respecting differences, a teacher centered in a social reconstructionist approach may present these questions quite differently. For example, she may ask: "How may the transformation of schooling (as witnessed in the video) actively work toward social structural equality? This question may challenge students to examine societal inequities. Given that Vera's excerpt highlights her desire to promote acceptance and unity, these pieces of her conception show her to be grounded in a human relations approach.

Even though social justice lessons were documented only in Tanisha and Vera's classroom, according to Mariam, she and Hannah had also planned to teach lessons with social justice content. In this next excerpt Mariam explains why they were unable to enact the lessons they planned for. She explains, "Hannah and I would meet to try and plan for this, but we kind of felt like if we didn't have like a grand period of time it wasn't going to happen."

This excerpt highlights the necessity of time in relation to these teachers desire to teach for social justice. While some teachers may be able to infuse social justice content into mandated curriculum, these teachers believed they needed time outside of the general reading, writing, and math curriculum in order to uphold their commitment. Given that social justice was understood as something, different, special, and compartmentalized, it is understandable why Hannah and Mariam may have attempted to plan for social justice, but could not translate their vision into

practice through lessons with social justice content because of their additive approach toward teaching for social justice. In this next excerpt Mariam informed me of the inherent challenges of teaching for social justice:

We were trying to do it [teach for social justice] in the beginning, and doing like race, and let's do sexuality and gender, and stuff like that. It's hard. I can't imagine us, we really overshot what we could do and that was overwhelming.

This excerpt highlights a significant point in relation to social justice. In that, this quote seems to imply that critical social justice issues (such as race, gender, sexuality) were not part of their daily work as teachers, but rather a lesson/activity/conversation they must have outside of the general curriculum. For this reason, one may infer that Mariam and Hannah were unable to enact the lessons they may have planned for because it was too difficult for them to carve out space to teach for social justice in a daily schedule that may already be seen as filled by administrative expectations. Thus, it is important to come back to this tension around time.

Literature shows that the current context of accountability and high-stakes testing is deeply associated with the pressure to raise test scores and adhere to a mandated curriculum (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Sleeter, 2005). For this reason, it is not difficult to imagine that navigating through this context in order to teach isolated lessons with social justice content may be especially difficult. Even as these teachers were *given* the time to teach isolated lessons on social justice content, finding the space to teach for social justice may not be easy. Not only did Vera, Mariam, Tanisha, and Hannah have to enact mandated curricula, they then had to find separate space and time to plan for and enact lessons with social justice content. For this reason, it is not surprising that Mariam found teaching for social justice as "overwhelming". In effect, teaching for social justice as an add-on requires that these teachers plan for, and enact, an entirely separate curriculum designed and created by them. By integrating social justice content

into the mandated curriculum, Vera, Mariam, Tanisha, and Hannah would not have to find space and time outside of their daily schedule. Rather, they would be able to both meet administrative expectations and uphold their commitment to teach for social justice.

Summarizing: Teaching for Social Justice as an Add-on

Even as these teachers may have found time to plan, either through the collaborative group discussions and/or meetings after-school, and enact minimal lessons with social justice content, they were unable to identify ways to infuse social justice content into the general curriculum. Regardless of their conception, and what they hoped and wanted to enact, only five lessons including social justice content were documented in teachers' classrooms (Tanisha 3, Vera 2). This brings to the forefront an important issue surrounding teaching for social justice. If teachers are unable to find the ways to navigate through a context of high-stakes testing and accountability, what does this mean about their commitments? If teachers compartmentalize, separate, and specialize social justice, how can it be possible for them to translate their vision of teaching for social justice into a context where mandated curriculum and test preparation may occupy the majority, if not the entirety, of their days? In the minds of the four teachers I observed, the challenge of teaching for social justice was not in the planning or creating of the lessons, rather, it was in finding the space to teach lessons with social justice content within an already full schedule that demands they focus on preparing students to take standardized tests and follow mandated curriculum.

This is an important consideration. These teachers are seen struggling to enact a human relations approach to social justice. If the goal of social justice is to examine and transform structural inequalities, what is the place for these lessons within a context of high-stakes testing and accountability? Would it be more feasible to teach for social justice if Vera, Mariam,

Tanisha, and Hannah were able to infuse social justice content into mandated curriculum? It may be that these teachers' collective understanding of teaching for social justice as discreet lessons outside of the general curriculum constrained them from moving forward with their commitment to teach for social justice.

In the end, Vera, Mariam, Hannah, and Tanisha were purposely chosen to participate in this study because they were all recent graduates of the same teacher education program, in their first or second year of teaching, and had a self-identified commitment to teach for social justice. Given these commitments, it might seem like Vera, Mariam, Hannah, and Tanisha had support systems in place that some teacher education programs committed to social justice may view as ideal. For example, P.S. 555 is only minutes from Teachers College, the university where they received their Master's degrees. Therefore, Vera, Tanisha, Hannah, and Mariam seemingly could stop by their former professors' office hours to ask questions or gain support, had access to the library for resources, could talk with previous supervisors, attend lectures/presentations surrounding social justice, and/or meet with colleagues. Given P.S. 555's physical proximity to the university, the staff at P.S. 555, was comprised of at least 5-7 graduates from Teachers College, including the principal. These teachers had graduated from Teachers College within the last five years. Suggestively, the context of P.S. 555 could be seen as a place where Vera, Mariam, Hannah, and Tanisha had the possibility to work with teachers who had like-minded visions.

Moreover, the principal seemed to encourage the teachers in their commitment to teach for social justice. In asking permission to conduct this study, he appeared to welcome the opportunity for Vera, Mariam, Tanisha, and Hannah to enact lessons on social justice content and agreed to allow me to spend significant time in their classrooms documenting lessons on

social justice content. In addition to giving consent to conduct my study in his school, the principal seemed supportive of the teachers' commitments; he granted Vera, Mariam, Tanisha, and Hannah time to specifically enact lessons on social justice content.

Regardless of their support systems, Vera, Mariam, Tanisha, and Hannah's understanding of social justice as separate and isolated from the general curriculum may have played a critical role in constraining them from moving forward with their commitment to teach for social justice. As a result, a conspicuous absence of lessons was documented in each of the teacher's classrooms. For this reason, the next section examines how these teachers made day-to-day curriculum choices. It was not their commitment to social justice that influenced what happened in the classroom, but rather what they conceived as required from the school's administration.

The Function of Accountability

Even as these teachers may have hoped to teach for social justice, I argue that accountability measures served to greatly influence what was and was not taught in the classroom. While high accountability measures were attached to the workshop model, mandated curriculum, and standardized tests, no accountability was attached to social justice. In this section I conclude that these teachers focused their attention on what they conceived as required rather than finding the cracks, seams, and space to teach for social justice. Given the decisive role accountability served in regards to the curricular decisions Vera, Mariam, Tanisha, and Hannah made in the classroom, this section ends with a discussion regarding external accountability and teaching for social justice.

Even though this section of the chapter has been purposely presented with a separate, distinct subheading, it is intimately linked and certainly related to the previous section (*Teaching for Social Justice, but Outside of the Curriculum*). For example, in the last section I illustrated

how Tanisha made the deliberate choice to set aside her commitment to teach for social justice in order to present a social studies lesson to her vice-principal. Whereas this piece of data speaks to these teachers's understanding of social justice as outside of the general curriculum, it could be assumed that accountability played a decisive role in Tanisha's decision to neglect her commitment to teach for social justice. For this reason, the evidence could be displayed in this section as well (*The Function of Accountability*). Similarly, in this section I illustrate how Vera, Mariam, Tanisha, and Hannah did not utilize the flexible space within a context of mandated curriculum to teach discreet lessons on social justice (in order to support the fact that accountability measures influenced the curricular choices these teachers made in the classroom). While this data is displayed in this section of the chapter, it could be used to the support the finding that Vera, Mariam, Tanisha, and Hannah understood teaching for social justice as an add-on, separate, and compartmentalized from their daily work as teachers.

Even as these teachers may have felt pressured to enact mandated curriculum and prepare students for standardized tests, lessons with social justice content may have been greater documented if Vera, Mariam, Tanisha, and Hannah were able to merge their commitment to teach for social justice with administrative demands. Given that they collectively viewed teaching for social justice as separate from the general math, reading, and writing curricula and focused their attention toward what they perceived as required from administration, social justice was minimally documented in interviews and observations. For this reason, I view these teachers' attention toward accountability and their perception of social justice as outside of the general curriculum as directly related. Although the two sections could be collapsed into one, I deliberately separate them in order to individually highlight the two major findings of this study.

According to Vera, Mariam, Tanisha, and Hannah, teachers at P.S. 555 were expected to use the programs adopted by their school, *Reading and Writers Workshop* and *Everyday Math*. In terms of enacting lessons within this mandated curriculum, Hannah explained, “You have to follow the workshop model, the mini-lessons and the focus teaching point. But you have flexibility in how you teach and the examples you use and how you are going to present it.” Hannah’s quote represents the sentiments of all the teachers, in that, they felt required to enact lessons structured according to the expectations of administration, but could change and alter the presentation of content in order to make lessons more interesting, meaningful and applicable to the students in their classes. As these teachers collectively agreed that they did not have to follow lesson plans explicitly, it is necessary to examine how this flexible space was utilized.

I purposely present data in this section that displays their understanding of curriculum as flexible in order to highlight their attention toward accountability. One may assume that these teachers would view the flexible space as a means to infuse social justice content; however this was not the case. Rather, it could be inferred that these teachers not only focused their attention toward what they deemed as required from administration, but utilized their understanding of the curriculum as flexible as a means to exceed administrative expectations.

These next excerpts, pulled from these teachers’ exit interviews, highlight what these teachers perceived as required and not required in regards to their understanding around the curriculum at P.S. 555:

Vera: We have a guide, we know what we should be teaching each day, but I will customize the lesson to my class.

Hannah: You are teaching the same lesson, but how you teach it might be different.

Mariam: A math lesson has to be taught. But, if you teach graphs that day you can teach it any way you want.

Given that Vera, Mariam, and Hannah's transcripts are alike, I assume that these teachers shared similar understandings around what was expected of them in regards to the curriculum choices they made in the classroom. These teachers appeared to understand curriculum implementation as the following: (1) it must follow a workshop model; (2) each teacher within a grade level must be teaching the same lesson; and (3) teachers had freedom to present the content in creative and interesting ways. Even as these teachers felt that they had flexibility within their lessons, they seemed to believe that they must abide by a certain structure and pace. This resulted in a visible tension between conformity and autonomy. While conformity is present through my participants' beliefs that they must follow a workshop model, autonomy is highlighted through their understandings of the lessons as being flexible. Whereas they may have seen a flexible space, there is no evidence to suggest that these teachers recognized this freedom as a place to integrate and teach discreet lessons with social justice content. Rather, Vera, Mariam, Tanisha, and Hannah utilized this freedom to promote the teaching point and enact lessons they thought were creative and interesting to the class.

This next excerpt is an example of how these teachers made curriculum choices that aligned with what they believed the administration regarded as mandatory. In this observation, Mariam is seen adapting and changing a lesson from the general math curriculum to make the content engaging for her students. To introduce the concept of congruency, she says the following to her students:

So I went to the doctor yesterday and he said I had a very strange sickness that only comes out at math time. The doctor was very scared for me. I am suffering from congruency. Every time I see something I want the same exact thing. I don't want your stuff I just want something exactly like it. It's a syndrome. That's a nice shirt, what size is it? I want something exactly like it. Let me see that bracelet. I don't want that one. I just want one exactly like it. I want one exactly like it. So then yesterday my friend Suzie Cooboozie came and she showed me a shape and I said 'Oohh that's so pretty I have to have one'. It was so nice and pretty I had to have one. I was looking at the size and I

wanted it and there was a battle between us. I wanted one exactly like it because I was suffering from congruency. I wanted one that was congruent. Try it. What is the word? (Students say congruent). I was going crazy I need one exactly like it. I took my congruency medicine and went to bed. I want you to figure out how you are going to get me a square exactly like this (points to square on board). Congruent means that it has to have the same length, same angle, and same shape.

To push her teaching point, she printed out pictures of her students' faces and asked them to cut their pictures in half. The students giggled as they received their pictures and shared them with students sitting close to them. As she continued with her lesson on congruency, she asked her students to paste only one side of their face to a piece of paper and then draw by hand the second half of their faces. Through this activity, Mariam's students were able to discuss and examine which parts of their faces were congruent and which were not. Even as Mariam could have simply taught the lesson out of her teaching manual, it can be assumed that she took large amounts of time to adapt the lesson in order to make it more engaging for her students.

Here, one can see how the tension between conformity and autonomy come into play. Autonomy is used to enhance the lessons creatively, but not used to merge social justice issues with administrative demands. It could be concluded that these teachers' decisions to not teach for social justice (as defined by the conspicuous absence of lessons with social justice content) was a deliberate choice, not a lack of ability.

Not only did Mariam's lesson reflect her previously articulated understanding of curriculum implementation (in regards to what she believed the administration expected of her), it could be inferred that Mariam changed and adapted her lesson to promote her teaching point because she believed this would help children learn and meet administrative expectations. Given that Mariam's lesson was in line with what she perceived as expected from the administration, I imagine that she was confident the administration would find her lesson to be not only *acceptable*, but above and beyond their expectations. In this sense, flexibility was used to meet

and exceed administrative expectations (that which she was held accountable for); rather than fulfill her commitment to social justice (that which she was not held accountable for). Given that Vera, Mariam, Tanisha, and Hannah may have not seen teaching for social justice as required by administration, it is quite possible that this was the reason they did not create the space to teach for social justice.

In addition to the workshop model, the pacing calendar (a curriculum map) heavily influenced what was and was not taught in the classroom. In this next excerpt Hannah illustrates the role of the pacing calendar, in relation to the curriculum decisions these teachers made day-to-day:

The pacing calendar determines what we are going to be doing each month, what content, what units we are going to be covering. That's all mapped out and planned before. So, we begin in the fall, September. We already know what units we are supposed to be on for reading, writing, math and what we are going to be covering for science and social studies and we are where we should be.

Hannah's view of curriculum appears to be heavily influenced by the pacing calendar, in that, her curricular choices were predetermined by what was already "mapped out and planned before." Recognizing that the pacing calendar should determine what and when curriculum content should be covered, Hannah did not seem to see that diverting from the pacing calendar was an option. Rather, Hannah's excerpt further speaks to how these teachers viewed curriculum implementation. Curriculum must: (1) follow the workshop model; (2) have a clear teaching point; and (3) be aligned with the pacing calendar.

As curricular expectations were set forth by the pacing calendar, and reinforced by weekly meetings with literacy coaches, it is not surprising that Vera, Mariam, Tanisha, and Hannah felt the need to direct their attention toward meeting these goals. During my one-week visit to both Tanisha and Vera's classroom, I observed how accountability played a decisive role

regarding the curricular decisions they made in the classroom. In Tanisha's classroom, I witnessed her spending up to four periods a day working on writing so that her students could finish their persuasive essays. After one of the writing lessons, I engaged in an informal chat with Tanisha. She described to me why writing occupied a significant amount of the day, "Writing assessments have to be done. We have to hurry up and finish the writing unit we are in now because we are past the time." Tanisha's curriculum choices, then, were premised on the belief that adhering to the pacing calendar was of the utmost important.

In the same way, Vera's daily schedule was occupied by writing. She explained during an informal chat, "These days I spend half the day on writing because we are so behind." While one can see how these teachers made deliberate decisions around curriculum, the link between accountability and curriculum implementation is powerfully illustrated by the way Tanisha and Vera set aside other curriculum commitments in order to adhere to the pacing calendar. In neglecting other content areas, Tanisha's and Vera's statements speak to how accountability may work to guide and inform the curricular decisions these teachers make in the classroom. Thus, curriculum decisions seemed to be grounded in the following thought: *If administration expects you to do it, then it has to be done.*

In addition to the pacing calendar and workshop model, high accountability measures were attached to student success on standardized tests. Mariam explains, "If we could make it [social justice] just as important as passing the test somehow, then we might get somewhere. Because nothing is more important than passing tests at this point, you know?" Mariam's comment hints at another important element regarding curriculum implementation. It appears as if Mariam was saying: *If I were held accountable for social justice (through observations, pacing calendar, coaches) then I would teach it, but I have to focus my attention toward what I am held*

accountable for, and that is passing the test. Not only does Mariam see student success on standardized tests as a priority at her school, her transcript strongly points to the reemerging theme that curriculum decisions were heavily influenced by what these teachers identified as required. As priority continues to be defined by accountability, it is significant to examine how and why these teachers felt required to prepare their students for the standardized tests. Below, Hannah and Tanisha explain a meeting that took place with their principal within the first few weeks of school:

Hannah: In the first one-on-one meeting with the principal, he took the list of students and put an asterisk after only having them for a few weeks as to who's going to pass and who's not based on the scores they came in with from there first practice test they took, their reading levels, and how we have assessed them so far. After just a few weeks, they [the administration] know who's going to pass and who they are concerned with. They want to have a certain percentage pass and that's what we are told.

Tanisha: At the beginning of the year, we all met with the principal and he said I expect 90% of these students to pass and I want you to sit down and have a talk with them.

Given this meeting with the principal as a whole (from the perspective of Tanisha and Hannah) was around student performance on standardized state tests, it follows that these teachers left the meeting with the explicit understanding that a specific number of students must pass these tests. In doing so, it can be inferred that preparation for high-stakes tests was attached to a sense of urgency that was heavily influenced by the expectations of the administration. Test preparation was perceived as mandatory, not a choice.

Vera explained how her curriculum was informed and centered on preparing for the standardized tests:

So the thing is with the ELA test, it starts in December and it was pretty much all reading. But when the test is over in January, you already have to start the math because the test is in March. With winter break and all that stuff and spring break, you lose time too. Once December starts, from December until the middle of March, that's all your doing. At least that's what it feels like. Because it overtakes writing, it overtakes reading, then in January you lose out on math. But in the beginning, when you are doing reading and writing, you

don't even do math because you feel like you need the extra time. It does overtake everything. At least that's how I felt this year.

At the core of her sentiment is the belief that preparing students for the state tests must take precedence over all other curricular areas, including any commitment she may have toward teaching for social justice. While preparing students for tests, as a whole, is far removed from her conception of social justice (as represented at the beginning of this chapter), Vera is still seen setting aside this commitment in order to meet the perceived expectations of the administration. In this next excerpt, one can see how Hannah's curriculum choices in and around the state tests mirror Vera's assertion:

Two weeks before, leading up to it [the math state test], I'd say the amount of test prep in the day increased and increased until like the week before it was pretty much preparing for the math test. As much as you can fit in without fully overwhelming them [the students].

Highlighted in Hannah's assertion again is the effort and attention these teachers put toward preparing their students for the standardized tests. Thus, even with an articulated commitment to teach for social justice, one may infer that Vera, Mariam, Tanisha, and Hannah had a constant focus on what they perceived as required: the workshop model; teaching points; pacing calendar; and test preparation. As priority was defined by accountability, student success on standardized tests trumped all other curriculum commitments, including mandated curriculum.

Mariam pointedly highlights the tension between accountability and her commitment to social justice in my exit interview, "It's easy for it [social justice] to get dragged to the back, for it to take a back seat. Hang out there social justice." Mariam's assertion articulates an important issue regarding teaching for social justice. Implied from her assertion, is the fact that social justice was not her priority and therefore, teaching for social justice was viewed as removed from

what she may consider urgent, required, or necessary (such as mandated curriculum and test preparation).

It could be assumed that these teachers recognized the need for external accountability in relation to their commitment to social justice. When I asked Vera the question (during the exit interview), “What would help you move forward in your commitment to teach for social justice?” she explained, “Someone checking on you from graduate school or someone making sure that you are kind of sticking to those principles, to that kind of teaching. Otherwise, I don’t think you are going to do it.” Through this assertion, one can see how Vera desires for accountability to be attached to her commitment to teach for social justice. Not only does this excerpt highlight Vera’s desire for support, but it also points to an important issue regarding teaching for social justice. Vera perceived teaching for social justice to be “that kind of teaching.” Given that she desires someone to make sure that she is, “sticking to those principles” suggests that Vera’s choices around curriculum were not driven by her once articulated orientation toward social justice, but rather influenced by accountability measures, such as the literacy coach. Vera’s comment, “Otherwise, I don’t think you are going to do it,” strongly supports the decision that accountability served to dictate what was and was not taught in the classroom. According to Vera, then, the lack of accountability attached to social justice, implies that lessons with social justice would not be taught.

Mariam’s image of social justice mirrored Vera’s sentiments. She shared during my exit interview:

To teach math, you have a math coach, you have a reading coach, you have a science specialist, you have that one coming in. Someone’s always on top of you. There’s not an aspect in this school, or a certain person, that reminds you that you have to teach this [social justice].

Whereas Mariam identified the support staff as an accountability measure, she recognized that they played a critical role in what was and was not taught in her classroom. For this reason, I assume that Mariam is expressing a need for external accountability. As Mariam wanted/desired a mentor, she seemed to want/desire accountability. Tanisha also viewed accountability as a necessity in relation to her commitment for social justice. She shared, "Like I would want a group to suggest ideas and plan with or it will not come to fruition. Without a group, realistically it's not really going to happen." Each teacher expressed a desire for external accountability in a different way: Vera (a mentor from graduate school); Mariam (a coach); and Tanisha (a collaborative group to work with). Regardless of their desire for a mentor, coach, and/or support group, these teachers recognized and believed that their conception of social justice would not be translated into practice without external accountability.

Summarizing: The Influence of External Accountability

In thinking about accountability, Vera, Mariam, Tanisha, and Hannah directed their attention toward what they perceived as required, such as the workshop model, pacing calendar, and student success on standardized tests. Even as these teachers may have once articulated a commitment to social justice, their commitment was rarely documented in the observation; rather what was visibly apparent was their fixed focus on administrative expectations. In some cases, these teachers not only set aside their commitments, but engaged in practices, such as test preparation, that may be seen as a direct compromise to what they may value and hold true in regards to their role as educators.

An instructional approach that is centered on preparing students to for standardized tests could be seen as contrasting to teaching for social justice within a social reconstructionist framework. In that, a social reconstructionist framework works to instill in students a desire and

thirst to examine and change inequities visible within the school, community, and world around them, while a focus on standardized tests works to maintain the status quo (Sleeter & Grant, 1999). This instructional approach significantly conflicts with the human relations approach as well. While a human relations approach advocates for unity, acceptance, and tolerance, much of standardized test discourse is attached to the common meritocratic belief that individual success is based on hard work and dedication, with no attention to the unequal distribution of resources, such as power, and wealth. While some may see the focus on testing as a useful lever for improving teaching and learning especially for students from historically underserved communities, others may see this as a form of punishment for those very same students (Lipman, 2007; Sleeter, 2007).

As administrative expectations worked its way through the curriculum, accountability worked to define how Vera, Mariam, Tanisha, and Hannah made choices around what was and was not taught in their classrooms. I argue that external accountability heavily influenced the curriculum decisions in these teachers' classroom; thus, without external accountability attached to social justice, these teachers were minimally able to translate their conceptions into classroom practice.

Summary of Chapter

This chapter highlighted Vera, Mariam, Tanisha, and Hannah's values, beliefs, and understandings around social justice. Throughout this chapter, I presented evidence to support three major findings: (1) these teachers had different conceptions of social justice; (2) minimal lessons on social justice were documented and (3) external accountability strongly influenced what was and was not taught in the classroom. I conclude that these teachers left their teacher

education programs with different understandings of social justice that were removed from an understanding of social justice as social reconstructionism (Sleeter & Grant, 1999). Whereas Tanisha, Vera, and Hannah's conceptions of social justice were heavily centered in a human relations approach, Mariam's beliefs were centered in the notion that upward mobility results from working hard, following directions, and doing what you are supposed to do.

Even as their conceptions were detached from an understanding of social justice as social reconstructionism, their commitment to teach for social justice was not enough to help them plan and enact discreet lessons with social justice content. Regardless of their differing conceptions, lessons with social justice were seldom, if ever enacted. Because accountability played such a decisive role in the decisions these teachers made in the classroom, the lack of accountability around social justice resulted in minimal documentation around their commitment to teach for social justice.

V--HOPE WITHOUT ILLUSION

Teachers cannot fix the problems of society by “teaching better,” nor can teachers alone alter the life chances of the children they teach; however, teaching for social justice does have the potential to contribute to the transformation of society’s fundamental inequalities in essential ways (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Darling-Hammond et al., 2002; Sleeter & Grant, 1999). In this effort, teacher education programs with a social justice stance often prepare and urge prospective teachers to teach for social justice. The purpose of this inquiry was to examine and document the social justice enactments of four beginning elementary school teachers.

In strengthening the teacher education for social justice research base, research that studies, “the impacts of teacher preparation, entry into teaching, and the conditions that support and constrain teacher effectiveness (Cochran-Smith, 2004, p. 156)” is needed. Given this call for research, there are limited studies that examine what prospective teachers actually do with what they learn in their teacher education programs. Even fewer studies have followed prospective teachers into their own classrooms to study the curriculum they construct, and how their conception of social justice connects to their practice (Cochran-Smith, 2004). Almost no research has followed preservice teachers, after they have completed a teacher education program with a social justice stance into their own elementary school classroom.

Our current school context of inequitable schooling, the imperativeness and necessity of educational and social change, the charge of many teacher education programs to prepare teachers to teach for social justice, teachers leaving their programs prepared and committed to teach for social justice, and the scant amount of research that examines how these teachers enact social justice curricula within their individual contexts, are just a few of the significant factors that determine the importance of this dissertation research.

As this research previously set out to document teachers' social justice enactments, the conspicuous absence of lessons on social justice content shifted the study toward an examination of why teachers did not teach for social justice. In chapter IV, I presented Vera, Maria, Tanisha, and Hannah's individual and collective understandings around teaching for social justice. Three major findings were highlighted and discussed in the chapter: (1) these teachers conceptualized teaching for social justice in different ways; (2) they collectively saw teaching for social justice as outside of the general curriculum; and (3) they recognized that accountability heavily influenced what was taught and not taught in the classroom.

The bulk of this chapter is dedicated to exploring the broader implications of this research concerning social justice curriculum in public schools today. This chapter closes with a section including my lingering questions and suggestions for future research.

As I attempted to ground my work in critical feminist research, it is necessary that I present my findings to Vera, Tanisha, Mariam, and Hannah in a careful and thoughtful manner. Through the research process, I sent emails and met with Vera, Tanisha, Mariam, and Hannah at least three times to discuss themes that emerged from the data. As the findings changed and altered significantly with each draft of my dissertation, I believe it is important to share the findings presented in the final draft of this dissertation with my participants. Therefore, I plan to arrange a time and place for these teachers to meet with me so that we can discuss the findings in person, rather than through email. Given that the findings are critical in nature, I will explain in detail how the data was analyzed through a social reconstructionist lens. For this reason, I will stress that the presentation of the data is not to belittle their classroom practice, but rather to unearth and reveal the inherent challenges of teaching for social justice within a context of high-stakes testing and accountability. I will remind them that their gracious generosity (allowing me

to conduct research in their classrooms) offered me the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding into the ways in which beginning teachers, with an articulated commitment to social justice, translate their vision of social justice into practice. Through this study, teacher educators may be able to gain insight into how to better prepare beginning teachers to carve out space to teach for social justice.

The Place for Social Justice in Today's Public Schools

To review, Vera, Mariam, Tanisha, and Hannah left their teacher education programs grounded in a commitment and desire to teach for social justice. Even as they graduated from the same teacher education program, they each conceptualized teaching for social justice differently. Throughout the school year, minimal lessons were documented with social justice. Moreover, no lessons were documented that suggested that Vera, Mariam, Tanisha, and Hannah were infusing critical social justice issues into mandated content areas. For this reason, social justice seemed to be detached, removed, and compartmentalized from their day-to-day work as teachers. It was not their commitment to social justice that seemed to drive their daily decisions around curriculum, but rather what they perceived as required from administration. Thus, accountability heavily influenced what was and was not taught in their classrooms.

If the basic premise of teaching for social justice is to alter and change our current dysfunctional and inequitable society, than teachers need to know, "from the start that they are part of a larger struggle and they have a responsibility to reform, not just replicate, standard school practices" (Cochran-Smith, 2004, p. 24). Moreover, teachers must reclaim their roles as activists and therefore be unwilling to negotiate and compromise their commitment to teach for social justice.

This research shows that teaching for social justice in an era of high-stakes testing and accountability is an uncertain, challenging, and frustrating endeavor. However, it remains the responsibility of teachers to foster an educational environment that transforms the existing social order and empowers their students to work toward change (Darling-Hammond et al., 2002). Without their efforts, schools will continue to function undemocratically, in complicity with the political economy (Darder, 2002). More specifically, schools will work to organize student populations in an economic hierarchy to officially carry out an unfair system of meritocracy that ultimately functions to legitimate the ideological formations necessary for the reproduction of inequality (Darder, 2002).

If teachers deliberately choose to set aside their commitment to teach for social justice, this may result in the maintenance of an existing, inequitable social order. As Sleeter and Grant (1999) assert, “One cannot choose not to choose, because to accept the status quo is also to make a choice (p. 224).” Thus, a submission to the agenda of administration, one that is not connected to a social justice stance, may reinforce the dominant knowledge within schools and society writ large, knowledge that perpetuates the status quo. If teachers adhere to this mainstream knowledge without questioning the practices within the school that may foster inequality, we as teacher educators and prospective educators will be unable to take actions to increase equity and social justice within society (Sleeter, 2007). In recognizing the minimal amount of lessons with social justice content, this research suggests a challenging notion concerning the positioning of such curricula in schools today.

In this section, I read across the findings to suggest three broader implications concerning social justice curriculum in public schools today. The sections are labeled as follows: (1)

keeping it real; (2) connecting the abstract to the concrete; (3) instilling urgency; and (4) providing support.

Keeping it Real

A first implication of this research illuminates the importance of painting a “real picture” of teaching for social justice in teacher education. Teacher educators must acknowledge and have conversations around teaching for social justice as uncertain work. Vera, Mariam, Tanisha, and Hannah remind us that a commitment to teach for social justice is not enough. Even as they expressed a desire to teach for social justice, these teachers were unable to merge their once articulated vision with administrative expectations. This suggests a serious implication for teacher education.

As teacher educators, we must acknowledge the inherent challenges beginning teachers may face in their attempt to teach for social justice (such as the ability to integrate social justice content into mandated curriculum) and carve out space for discussions that challenge teachers to see teaching for social justice uncertain work. In order to push through doubts, insecurities, and ambiguity related to teaching for social justice, I strongly suggest that teachers have the opportunity to dialogue with supervisors/faculty members/cooperating teachers through their first few years of teaching.

Feelings of uncertainty may force teacher in two directions (Campbell, 2007): (1) intrigue, instruction, and opportunity and (2) anxiety, stress, and submission. In the first case, uncertainty may push teachers in the direction of intrigue, instruction, and opportunity. They may use moments of uncertainty to question and reflect on their practice. As they question and examine their uncertainty, they may feel compelled to recognize the possibilities that emerge from uncertainty (Campbell, 2007). If teachers feel comfortable engaging in those uncomfortable

moments of uncertainty and ambiguity, they may be able to further push themselves forward in their commitment to teach for social justice; rather than the naturally predisposed nature of some teachers to avoid uncertainty.

In the second case, uncertainty can cause the teachers anxiety, stress, and reason to succumb to the pressures of administration. The idea that teachers prepared and committed to teach for social justice set aside their commitments is crucial and necessary to unpack. As mandates such as *No Child Left Behind* continue to limit the curriculum choices of many of our U.S. public schools, teachers must find the small space between pressures such as mandated curriculum, standardized tests, and rigid schedules to carve out space to teach for social justice (Sleeter, 2005).

If teachers view uncertainty as positive construct, they may be more resilient in their commitment to enact social justice curricula. Preparing teachers to see teaching for social justice as uncertain work may aid them to overcome, acknowledge, and cope with the myriad of constraints that they may face in their commitment to enact social justice curriculum. Prospective teachers need to be offered, right from the start of teaching, a vision of teaching for social justice as imperative, uncertain work, with no answers, and no set of best practices. This understanding may offer some hope to beginning teachers when they feel teaching for social justice as detached and isolated from the agenda of the public school in which they work.

I suggest that teacher educators prepare teachers to anticipate the uncertainty related to teaching for social justice. Teachers should leave their programs understanding that it may be confusing, difficult, and challenging to find time to teach for social justice. Moreover, they should recognize and acknowledge that their agenda may feel completely disconnected from the realities of the public school in which they work. If we present to teachers teaching for social

justice as uncertain, ambiguous work, beginning teachers may feel more validated during moments of doubt and impossibility.

I encourage discussions that use moments of uncertainty as a stimulus to engage in reflective practice that may arouse intrigue, curiosity, and inquiry; to recognize the possibilities that may emerge from the uncertainties (Campbell, 2007). I believe that it is imperative and necessary that teacher educators bridge the conflicting agendas of teacher education and public schools to create a more realistic, and available vision of teaching for social justice within a context of high stakes testing and accountability. For example, many teacher education programs require preservice teachers to reflect on their practice through dialogue journals (journals between students and cooperating teacher, faculty members and/or supervisor). Many times these dialogue journals serve as a means for preservice teachers to share issues around classroom management, lesson planning, and or individual student/parent challenges. However, dialogue journals could also serve as a means for students teachers to share their uncertainties and challenges in regards to teaching for social justice.

As these teachers share their doubts and insecurities around teaching for social justice, supervisors/faculty members/ cooperating teachers can encourage preservice teachers to push through their uncertainties (in regards to teaching for social justice) by asking questions that challenge the teacher to use the notion of uncertainty in a positive and constructive way. For example, a teacher felt that she could not infuse social justice content into a math lesson that connected to the standards. Therefore, in her journal, she wrote that she would teach individual/separate lessons on math and social justice. In response, a supervisor/faculty member/cooperating teacher challenged her student teacher to think about the ways she could merge content standards with social justice content (by asking her questions such as "How can

you connect this math content standard to a critical social justice issue?"') and providing the teacher with resources and examples of math lessons that integrated social justice content. If provided with the opportunity, a faculty member could work with the individual student teacher and/or group (with similar articulated challenges) to develop a lesson that both integrates social justice content and meets administrative expectations. In this way, a teacher is able to have tangible example of how teaching for social justice can be translated into classroom practice.

As student teachers communicate their uncertainties (in relation to teaching for social justice), supervisors/faculty members/cooperating teachers may be able to help student teachers push through their doubts and insecurities, so that uncertainty challenges a teacher to examine and critically reflect on her practice. If not through dialogue journals, a teacher educator could maintain an on-line threaded discussion with beginning teachers (through their first few years of teaching) in which a teacher could have the opportunity to dialogue with other educators and faculty members. Not only would the threaded discussion offer a beginning teacher the a resourceful means to push through uncertainty, but the threaded discussion may also provide her with a platform to engage in thoughtful discussion related to the challenges of teaching for social justice.

Connecting the Abstract to the Concrete

In addition to portraying teaching for social justice as uncertain and ambiguous work, a second implication of this study touches on the importance of providing teachers with concrete examples (lessons plans in the form of vignettes), of how to translate their vision of social justice into practice.

Despite these teachers' commitment to social justice, Vera, Mariam, Tanisha, and Hannah seemed unable to infuse social justice content into a context of high-stakes testing and

accountability (such as the workshop model, standards, pacing calendar, and test preparation). As these teachers fixed their attention on what they perceived as required from the administration, Vera, Mariam, Tanisha, and Hannah remind us that external accountability significantly influenced the curricular decisions these teachers made in the classroom.

If teachers are offered concrete examples of social justice enactments from beginning and experienced teachers, they may be able to better understand how to navigate through pressures relating to high-stakes testing and accountability. As teacher educators committed to social justice, we need to recognize the importance of providing preservice teachers with an understanding of how to translate their theory into practice, more specifically, elucidating the complexities of connecting the abstract to the concrete. I encourage spaces within teacher education programs where teacher educators and preservice teachers can discuss the “connection” aspect.

In terms of teaching for social justice, there is little material that gives teachers specific guidance in what to do. The majority of material is theoretical, with very few specific teaching guides (Sleeter & Grant, 1999). As teachers attempt to teach for social justice, they need direction “in an open-ended fashion that would guide a teacher in developing his or her own plan of action (p. 211).” Also, the few anthologies that illustrate teachers’ enactments of social justice content (Darling & Hammond, 2002; Makler & Hubbard, 2000) often portray the work of preservice teachers, experienced teachers, or high-school teachers. In each of these cases, there is little discussion of how beginning teachers navigated through administrative expectations in order to teach for social justice. This research confirms the need to provide preservice teachers with honest, tangible examples of how to translate their conception into a context of high-stakes testing and accountability. As Cochran-Smith (2004) asserts:

Beginning teachers need to have a chance to see and hear over time how their more experienced mentors, or those joined in the same commitment construct problems, wrestle with uncertainty, change their minds about long-established practices or assumptions, gather evidence and examples for analysis and interpretations, connect pieces of information to one another, and develop interpretive frameworks (p. 16).

Thus, teachers need to see and hear how beginning and experienced teachers alike grappled with the complexities related to teaching for social justice and learning to teach for social justice. Without attending to the need and importance of elucidating the connecting piece of theory into practice, teachers may be unable and uncertain in how to translate their conception into the classroom in which they teach. As Banks (2004) notes, “critique without hope may leave students disillusioned and without agency” (p. 298). For this reason, teachers must be given viable means in which to translate their vision of social justice into practice.

Thus, the findings of this research point to the necessity of providing teachers with concrete examples of teachers learning to teach for social justice. Therefore, it is my suggestion to present lessons as vignettes, so teachers can gain an understanding of how to navigate through administrative expectations in order to enact lessons with social justice content. The vignette would describe: the context of the school; the components of the lesson; how the standards were met; and the trials a teacher may face in enacting a social justice lesson. In understanding it may be difficult to gather a substantial number of vignettes; a teacher education program may require a student teacher to transcribe each enacted lesson with social justice content into a vignette, a detailed description of her social justice lesson. It is important to note that the vignettes do not need to be an exemplarity illustration of a social justice lesson; but rather a tangible example of how a teacher taught a *social justice* lesson. In this way, a teacher education program, over the years, could have a large number of vignettes to present to preservice teachers. As an activity, each group of two preservice teachers would be given a vignette to reflect on and examine.

Questions to guide teachers in conversation may include: How did this teacher conceptualize teaching for social justice? If and how did they navigate through administrative expectations? Is this a lesson you may teach in your own class? Does this lesson work to maintain or disrupt the status quo? These small conversations could lead into broader whole group conversations surrounding discussions related to translating a vision of social justice into practice, navigating through the difficult terrain of high-stakes testing and accountability, and teaching for social justice as uncertain work.

Providing Support

I urge teacher educators to think about ways to provide beginning teachers with support in their commitment to teach for social justice. Even as a preservice teacher may have developed curriculum that connected to the standards, read *Beyond Heroes and Holidays* (Lee et al., 2006), and enacted lessons with social justice content in their teacher education programs, Vera, Mariam, Tanisha, and Hannah remind us that teachers (prepared and committed to teach for social justice) may be unable to infuse critical social justice issues into their daily work as teachers.

Accountability measures seemed to significantly influence the curriculum choices Vera, Mariam, Tanisha, and Hannah made in the classroom. Therefore, it is not difficult to imagine why these teachers expressed a desire for external accountability (such as a mentor, support staff, and/or a collaborative group to work with) in relation to their commitment to teach for social justice. For this reason, teacher educators should consider the support systems beginning teachers may need to move forward with their commitment to teach for social justice. I suggest a mentor (a cooperating teacher, supervisor, and/or teacher educator) be given to each recent graduate. The beginning teacher would meet with her mentor approximately twice a month to plan and enact

social justice curriculum. If the mentor and teacher are not within proximity of each other, they may have to communicate via phone or internet. In addition to a mentor, recent graduates would also be expected (if near their teacher education program) to attend a monthly seminar related to teaching for social justice. The seminar, led by a teacher educator, would provide a platform for teachers to collaborate and share thoughts related to the teaching for social justice. In addition to monthly meetings, recent graduates would have the opportunity to engage in ongoing discussion over the internet. In the threaded discussion, beginning teachers could share lessons ideas and raise/discuss issues related to enacting social justice curriculum in their classrooms. Through these support systems, we may encourage and support teachers in their effort to teach for social justice.

Lingering Questions: Suggestions for Future Research

In concluding this study, I am left with several important questions. First, there are questions regarding teachers' commitments to teaching and learning in a context of high-stakes testing and accountability. My study focused primarily on documented lessons with social justice content. Teacher educators could investigate and highlight the connections between teachers' conceptions of social justice and how it translates into pedagogy. Cochran-Smith (2004) refers to this notion as a "pedagogy of principles." I believe that looking at the data with this lens is important. Although, there was a conspicuous absence of lessons on social justice content, the teachers were putting effort forward to academically prepare their students (Ladson-Billings, 1994), build community, and create positive, safe environments for their students. These are a few of the tenets that are commonly seen in various multicultural education/ social justice frameworks (Sleeter & Grant, 1999). The tenet that is missing from their pedagogy is the enactment of curriculum that challenges students to examine and alter the status quo. In respect

to this research, it seems that there is much to be learned by examining what teachers are able to do and not able to do within a context of high-stakes testing and accountability. This may offer teacher educators and teachers a great understanding of the tensions surrounding teaching for social justice within an urban school context.

Another line of research involves looking deeper into their conceptions around social justice. For the purpose of this research I examined their conception during their first or second year of teaching. Although each teacher graduated from the same school, their culture, school, work, and life experiences heavily influenced their conceptions in very different ways. For this reason, it would be interesting to examine how their conceptions changed and/or stayed the same from their teacher education program into the classroom. This may help us to understand what pieces of their conception were negotiated and what were visible within their day-to-day practice. If we delve deeper into each individual teacher's understandings of social justice, we may be better able to see how their conception are funneled into practice.

Lastly, I believe it is important to examine teachers who are able to infuse critical social justice issues into their daily work as teachers. As an implication of this study, I suggested that teacher educators provide prospective teachers with concrete examples of beginning teachers and experienced teachers alike translating their vision into practice. It is for this reason, I believe it is important to document the careful ways teachers committed to social justice integrate their vision of social justice into mandated curriculum. By examining teachers who understand and are able translate their vision into practice; we may better be able to present prospective teachers the ways in which beginning teachers navigate through a context of high-stakes testing and accountability.

Reflection

I titled this dissertation “Teaching for Social Justice: An Uncertain and Ambiguous Endeavor,” however, this research process could be described as an “uncertain and ambiguous endeavor” as well. For the purpose of this dissertation, I presented the three major findings of the study in this section. Even as I spent a year in these teachers’ classrooms and worked to document and analyze their conceptions and enactments of social justice, it is difficult to make any concrete conclusions related to these teachers’ individual and collective understandings around teaching for social justice.

This research begs me to question the place for social reconstructionism in today’s public schools. As these beginning teachers were faced with the pressures of working in an urban school (as described in the literature review of this dissertation), they still attempted to carve out space to teach for social justice. If not through lessons, then Hannah, Vera, Tanisha, and Mariam’s orientations toward social justice seemed to translate into the classroom through pedagogical choices (such as seating students in table groups) and/or discussions and conversations (as documented during the one-week visits to their classroom) related to their articulated conception of social justice. Even as minimal lessons with social justice were documented, Tanisha, Vera, Hannah, and Mariam were attempting to teach for social justice within a school structure that was centered on mandated curriculum and student success on standardized tests. These teachers connected social justice to ideals such as question and think (Tanisha), rising up for one another (Vera), respect (Hannah), and rewards and punishment (Mariam). Given the evidence presented in this dissertation and the minimal literature that document beginning teachers attempting to teach for social justice in a social reconstructionist

framework, I leave this research with more questions than answers around what teaching for social justice from a social reconstructionist lens looks like in the classroom:

What does teaching for social justice as social reconstructionism look like in the classroom? What conversations/activities/lessons would take place? If accountability pressures were not in place, would these teachers be teaching for social justice? What does this mean for teacher education? How is what these teachers do in the classroom related to social justice at all? Teaching kids to respect each other, teaching kids to get along, having high academic standards, having clear consequences in the classroom, breaking down stereotypes: are these orientations toward social justice any different than how teachers may have perceived teaching fifty years ago? How does social justice relate to the social structure of school's today? Is teaching for social justice (from a social reconstructionist perspective) even possible?

This was an informative research process that begs me to reflect on my decisions as a researcher. If I had the opportunity to conduct this study again, I would spend more time in Vera, Hannah, Mariam, and Tanisha's classroom. Even as I was in their classrooms as a volunteer, I was not taking field notes or documenting what they said or did in their classroom. In my effort engage in critical feminist work, I did not want to define what I observed as teaching for social justice, rather I asked the teacher to name what she did as *social justice*. In this sense, I may have missed many opportunities to document their understanding of social justice because I defined social justice too narrowly (as discreet, content-based lessons) and relied on Vera, Hannah, Mariam, and Tanisha to call or email me when they would be teaching a lesson with social justice content. With this in mind, I would change and/or adapt my study so that I did ask these teachers questions such as: What did you do or not do today in your classroom that connects to your conception of social justice? I noticed that you chose a book related to gender differences,

was this a purposeful choice on your part to teach for social justice? How does the way you spoke with your student during your lunch period connect to your conception of social justice? Is the time you spend outside of the regular school day helping your students with homework linked in anyway to your understanding of social justice? These are just a few examples of questions I may ask that could help me to elicit greater data around these teachers' individual and collective understandings of social justice. By asking questions, I am more in line with a critical feminist framework that works to build intimate relationship and trusting relationships with participants. In my fear to both adhere to my research design (as presented in the dissertation proposal) and not burden the teachers with my presence, I may have missed myriad opportunities to collected data that related to my research questions and created an uncomfortable position for my teachers to name content solely content-based decisions as social justice.

Even as I came into the research with an understanding of social justice as social reconstructionism, this study elucidates the complexity behind maintaining a social reconstructionist framework in one's own classroom. As a beginning teacher, I was unable to translate a vision of social justice grounded in a human relations approach into practice. Even as Tanisha, Vera, Mariam, and Hannah articulated conceptions of social justice which appeared to be significantly removed from an understanding of social justice as social reconstructionist, they, too, appeared to struggle in carving out space to teach for social justice. Regardless of a teacher's values, beliefs, and understandings around teaching for social justice, a teacher may struggle to enact any vision of social justice into classroom practice. For this reason, I wonder if and how a beginning teacher or an experienced teaching alike may uphold a social reconstructionist framework alongside the myriad pressures related to accountability and high-stakes testing. Given the lack of accountability in and around social justice, what does this mean for the future

of our schools and teacher education? How do we best prepare our teacher to navigate through the difficult terrain of mandated curriculum, standardized tests, and accountability pressures to teach for social justice?

Final Thoughts

This research explored the social justice enactments of four beginning teachers. This inquiry stems from my belief that teaching for social justice is imperative and necessary to altering our current inequitable school system and society writ large. During the time I spent with Vera, Mariam, Tanisha, and Hannah, I was continually amazed and inspired by their hard work, diligence, and commitment to their students. It was not uncommon for them to stay past eight at night, or keep students well into the evening to ensure that they did their homework, or to give up lunch in order to have a conversation with a child. Grounded in their work as teachers, was a deep commitment to care.

Regardless of their understandings, beliefs and values around social justice, Vera, Mariam, Tanisha, and Hanna appeared challenged to translate their once articulated visions of social justice into practice (discreet lessons with social justice content). Given the current context of high-stakes testing and accountability, these teachers remind us that beginning teachers committed to social justice may focus their attention toward practices that work to maintain the status quo; rather than break down and alter our current inequitable society (Lipman, 2007; Sleeter, 2007).

Thus, teacher educators must continue to examine the intricacies and complexities related to teaching for social justice in a context of high-stakes testing and accountability. It is not enough that teachers leave with a commitment to teach for social justice. Prospective teachers must be provided with a concrete understanding of social justice that is real and applicable to

their lives as teachers in an era of high-stakes testing and accountability. For this reason, I suggest that teachers are presented an understanding of social justice as one of hope without illusion. A vision of social justice, that may be uncertain, but is real, applicable, and pertinent to their work as teachers.

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Appendix A: Protocol for Individual Interview #1

Guiding Research Questions:

- What are beginning teachers' conceptions of social justice curriculum?
- What experiences inform beginning teachers' conceptions and enactments of social justice curriculum?

Conceptions:

1. What do you think are the most important social justice issues right now, locally, nationally, globally?
2. What aspects of social justice do you believe are important or relevant to your students?
3. What do you think social justice means in the classroom setting? (Prompt: If you were to walk into a classroom tomorrow during a social justice lesson, what would you see? hear?)
4. How does having your own classroom change your conceptions of a social justice\curriculum? (Prompt: How did you imagine social justice curriculum during your student teaching? What about now? How has this conception changed? What's different?)

Influences:

1. What has helped you frame your conceptions of social justice? (Prompts: Where (or who?) does it come from? What experiences have you had that have influenced your ideas about social justice? home, work, school, community/neighborhood in which they were raised or currently live, world/other, values/ principles, community service organizations?)
2. Have any of these informed your practice? How?
3. How did your pre-service program emphasize social justice? How did the program view social justice?
4. What activities, readings, discussions, experiences were important to you or had an impact on you?
5. Have any of these informed your practice? How?

Appendix B: Protocol for Individual Interview #2

Guiding Research Questions:

- How do beginning teachers incorporate social justice issues into their practice?
- What supports or hindrances are present in the classroom and/or school as beginning teachers enact social justice curricula?

Enactments:

1. What are some important ideas/concepts that you think your students should know and think about?
2. Describe some of the ways that you have incorporated this into your classroom curriculum (or plan to)? (Prompt: Could you tell me a story about one lesson? Could you share an example of that from the past or any ideas that you would like to implement?)
3. What do you think students come away with? How do you know?
4. Have you had a chance to see other teachers do lessons on social justice? If so, what things have you seen or heard about? (Prompt for examples)

Support and Hindrances:

1. In an ideal world, what supports would be in place to teach for social justice?
2. What supports exist at your school? In your classroom? (Prompt: Do social justice curriculum ideas get discussed amongst your colleagues? Does administration have a particular stance?)
3. Have you had any social justice lesson ideas this year that you have not had the opportunity to do? Why? What gets in your way?

Appendix: C: Protocol for Collaborative Discussion #1, #2, #3**Guiding Research Questions:**

- What are beginning teachers' conceptions of social justice curriculum?
- What experiences inform beginning teachers' conceptions and enactments of social justice curriculum?
- How do beginning teachers incorporate social justice issues into their practice?
- What supports or hindrances are present in the classroom and/or school as beginning teachers enact social justice curriculum?

Discussion Questions:

1. What are some of the challenges and successes you have faced thus far in your commitment to teach for social justice?
2. What are some of the lessons that worked well in the classroom?
3. What are some ways that you may have overcome challenges related to teaching for social justice?

Appendix D: Observation Template**Beginning Teachers' Social Justice Enactment of Social Justice Curriculum
Observation Data Collection Template**

Teacher's name: _____

Grade level: _____

Date of observation: _____

Time arrived in field: _____

Time left the field: _____

Give this lesson a title: _____

Before beginning the observation, what conversations did I have with the teacher about what I would be looking for?

Before beginning the observation, what conversations did I have with the teacher about what they would be doing?

Set-up of the room for the lesson

Materials used and how they were used

Event Log

Time	Event	Description	Observer's Comments
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Comments teacher made at end of lesson:**My immediate thoughts/feelings/questions:****Appendix E: Letter to Principal**

January 17, 2007

Dear Dr. McFarlane,

As a research team, we are committed to providing our students with an education that prepares them to be successful in their current classrooms and also prepares them to be responsible and active citizens in their future classrooms, schools, and communities. In addition to preparing our students with the academic skills to be successful in their educational endeavors, we also find it necessary to challenge our students to think critically, respect differences, use their voice, and deconstruct stereotypes and misconceptions.

In our commitment to this research project, we plan to enact lessons that relate to issues surrounding social justice. In order to enact social justice curricula in our classrooms, we ask that we can have two periods every other week dedicated to social justice. To ensure that this curriculum will be meaningful and appropriate for our students, we plan to meet 2-3 times a month to strategically plan lessons related to this notion.

We appreciate your support with this matter and look forward to our meeting.

Sincerely,
Hannah, Vera, Ruchi, Mariam, Tanisha