Finding the Open Spaces in Closed Systems: An Exploration of Critical Pedagogy with a

Social Justice Directive in an Ontario Secondary School Classroom

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Abstract

This study examines the first experience of students, teachers, and an administrator in implementing a teacher-designed Leadership in Social Justice Program at a large urban Ontario secondary school. The program aimed to infuse a Freirean concept of critical pedagogical praxis (Freire, 1970/1993) in a grade 12 integrated educational experience with a social justice directive. Data were collected through two questionnaires and eight in-depth interviews. The data identified three areas of awareness that described ways in which student participants were impacted most profoundly (a) developing self-awareness, (b) understanding a new educational paradigm, and (c) finding a place in the world. The study found that the program was successful in highlighting the possibility for more meaningful education and engaged many students deeply; however, its success was limited by the lead teacher's failure to fully grasp and implement tenets of Freirean critical pedagogy that involved the role of the teacher in pedagogical processes.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The creation of a more socially just society has been a longstanding goal of

progressive educators, as exemplified by the tradition of John Dewey (1916/1966), and

continues to be a goal of critical educators today. Paulo Freire (1970/1993), for example,

developed a particularly influential expression of critical pedagogical theory which

provides a solid theoretical base for the implementation of social justice driven praxis. In

the current educational climate, educators can find permission to teach for social justice

in the curriculum documents (Schweisfurth, 2006). Furthermore, since the Fall of 2010,

the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) provides an example of a board-wide social

justice initiative through the implementation of their Social Justice Action Plan. This

plan requires all TDSB teachers to integrate the teaching of social justice in their

classrooms. In this critical qualitative inquiry, I undertake a case study of an innovative

social justice program in a single school. I explore the experience of students, teachers,

and an administrator involved in the newly conceived Leadership in Social Justice

Program at a large urban secondary school in the province of Ontario, which I call

Northridge Secondary School.

This innovative program sought to infuse critical pedagogical practices in a grade

12 integrated educational experience, with a focus on issues of social justice. The lead

teacher of this program, John Hammer (like all names in this study, a pseudonym),

initiated this program with the intention of offering a new educational paradigm that

would challenge and encourage students to make positive social change. The Leadership

in Social Justice Program involved a four credit program that was segmented to adhere to

curriculum expectations, but the subject matter was largely integrated to allow and to

encourage cross-curricular connections. Northridge Secondary School typically offered students a self-paced program, which allows students to complete each credit at their own speed and does not insist that students attend classes regularly. However, the Leadership in Social Justice Program was not self-paced. Each student was expected to attend class, to contribute to collaborative discussion, and to complete assignments by a specified deadline. The course attempted to create a democratic space for learners to explore issues of social justice relevant to their lives and interests. Students were able to define their own learning experience by participating in "campaign" groups, which consisted of 4-5 individuals with similar interests who worked together in their study of the program materials and in the completion of practical assignments, many of which they defined in their working (or campaign) group.

Like any first iteration of a program, there were both successful and unsuccessful elements and experiences that elicited positive and negative responses from participants. The study focused on the varied experiences of students, teachers, and the administrator involved in the program. Qualitative data were collected through the administration of two questionnaires and through interviews with the student participants, the two teachers involved with the program, and the school's principal. The objective of the data collection was to identify elements that resulted in both positive and negative experiences for participants. As a result of the data collection, I was able to identify those factors that helped students to develop a greater sense of awareness as a result of their involvement with the program. I was also able to identify the strengths of the program so that these elements can be considered for incorporation in future iterations. As well, I identified weaknesses and have made recommendations about correcting those factors that were

problematic. This exploration attempted to navigate and interpret the experiences of the participants of the Leadership in Social Justice Program at Northridge Secondary School to offer an example of the enactment of critical pedagogy in Ontario secondary school settings.

Background of the Problem

This study drew inspiration from a Freirean (Freire, 1970/1993) perspective of critical pedagogy with the inclusion of contributions from contemporary critical pedagogues. Educational programs that operate in a critical pedagogical framework understand that school is a vital site for the struggle for social justice and that critical pedagogy responds to practices that cause social injustice and exploitation. Critical pedagogy encourages students to view themselves as historical subjects who have the power to change unjust circumstances by highlighting human agency and the possibility for change (Freire, 1970/1993). Additionally, Freire (1970/1993) stresses that his work must adapt to each highly individualized context and challenged educators to take up his theories and modify them. bell hooks (1994) addresses this challenge when she states that she has "taken threads of Paulo's work and woven it into that version of feminist pedagogy I believe my work as a writer and a teacher embodies" (p. 52). Other North American pedagogues have also taken up this challenge. Prominent among them are Ira Shor (1992), Henry Giroux (1988), Joe Kincheloe (2008), Peter McLaren (1989), and Michael Apple (1982/1995). Apple (1999) sums up this perspective in the following statement: "We, too, must take Paulo Freire in, with all his works complexities and contradictions, rework him in the light of new and emerging historical circumstances and stand on his shoulders" (p.18). This study also stood on the shoulders of Freire

(1970/1993) as it extended and applied his critical pedagogical theory to a unique and contemporary context.

Lee Anne Bell's (2007) description of social justice education as both a goal and a process connects the goal of social justice to the pedagogical process of critical pedagogy. The necessity of this partnership is initially explained by exploring the need for a synergy and dialogue between the competing voices of critical pedagogues to push highly theorized ideas into classroom practice. The goal of social justice is explored through the work of Amaryta Sen's (2009) *The Idea of Justice*, which suggests that the focus of social justice must shift from a theoretical dialogue to action that removes the remediable injustices that exist around us in an effort to bridge the gap between theory and practice. The growing number of theorists involved in the exploration of critical pedagogy with a social justice orientation deepens the pool of knowledge upon which this study is based.

Statement of the Problem in Context

In its Social Justice Action Plan, the Toronto District School Board, the country's largest, defines social justice as:

> a specific habit of justice that is based on concepts of human rights, equity, fairness, and economic egalitarianism. Social justice ... is, in plain terms, the movement towards a more socially just world through the actions of a group of individuals working together to achieve its goals. (Toronto District School Board, 2010)

This definition of social justice is based largely in the processes and actions of individuals towards the common goal of achieving a more socially just society. Similarly,

Bell (2007) describes social justice education as both a goal and a process: "The goal of social justice education is full and equal participation of all groups in a society that is mutually shaped to meet their needs," (p. 3) while, "the process for attaining the goal of social justice . . . should be democratic and participatory, inclusive and affirming of human agency and human capacities for working collaboratively to create change'' (p. 1). This understanding of social justice education as a theoretical end point and a lived pedagogical process produces a, "synergy that elevates both scholarship and transformative action" (Kincheloe, 2008, p.12). A strictly theoretical approach to teaching social justice removes us from the diverse and distinct range of injustices and suffering of groups and individuals in the system of education. A diagnosis of injustice is a necessary starting point for critical discussion and for realizing of the necessity of critical pedagogy as a lived practice and a process to work towards the goal of social justice education.

Purpose of the Study

This qualitative case study documents the collaborative efforts of students, teachers, and an administrator to create a space where critical pedagogy with a social justice directive can be practiced and explored in the specific context of an Ontario secondary school classroom. The purpose of this study is to explore the critical pedagogical practices and the experiences of the involved parties of this pedagogical climate. This exploration of critical pedagogy in action will uncover areas of strengths, weaknesses, and possibilities for the conceptualization and implementation of teaching for social justice through critical pedagogy, with a focus on how critical pedagogical

theory can be enacted in practical classroom situations. The purpose of the study is addressed through the following four research questions:

- In what ways did the Leadership in Social Justice Program impact students?

- What aspects of the program can be identified as strengths?

- What aspects of the program can be identified as weaknesses?

- How can an exploration of this program be utilized in future educational theory and practice?

These questions guide the exploration of a critical classroom in terms of the relationships and experiences of participants and the connection between critical pedagogy and social justice driven education. As noted below, the data for this study are collected through questionnaires and interviews which give voices to teachers, students, and an administrator regarding their opinions, perceptions, and feelings about their experience in this first iteration of what was intended to be a critical pedagogical classroom with a social justice lens.

Rationale

This study provides a concrete strategy to help to dispel the fears of those educators who are nervous about teaching controversial issues and to serve as a resource and motivator for future explorations of educating for social justice through critical pedagogy. Concrete strategies through practical examples of social justice driven education in action provide educators with a precedent to improve upon in future practice. The circumstances of this study accepted hooks' (2003) challenge to find "open spaces in closed systems" (p. 74) by locating spaces where critical pedagogy can be infused into established educational institutions. This study is an example of the efforts

of educators and administrators as critical agents in changing educational paradigms. It also adds to the literature surrounding critical pedagogy and social justice education in practice and provides researchers and practitioners with examples of strategies that can be applied to diverse circumstances in the context of Ontario classrooms.

Scope and Limitations of the Study

The study attempts to explore the theoretical milestones of critical pedagogical theory but does not claim to fully encompass the broad range of debate and exploration that has transpired in this subject area. The democratic nature of critical pedagogy with a social justice directive encourages diverse interpretations and negates the need for a concrete and singular interpretation. The focus of this case study remains on the specific and intricate circumstances of a large urban secondary school in the province of Ontario. The participants all come from a single school and include only 1 administrator, 2 teachers, and 23 students (7 boys and 16 girls). While Creswell (2008) maintains that the use of qualitative research methodology encourages an understanding of a complex issue, the case study offers a subjective picture of a specific educational situation. As a result, conclusions from this study suggest possible impacts of the use of critical pedagogy directed by social justice goals. The study is neither exhaustive nor applicable to all situations.

Organization of Report

This exploration is presented in five chapters. Chapter One introduces the study and provides a brief overview of research questions, rationale, theoretical framework, and limitations of the study. Chapter Two presents a review of related and relevant literature essential for providing a foundation of knowledge in the areas of critical pedagogy and

educating for social justice. Chapter Three presents the methodology of this study and explains the rationale for the use of a qualitative case study approach. This chapter also outlines the lens of grounded theory and the use of questionnaires and qualitative interviews as data collection tools. Chapter Four provides an overview and a summary of research findings and identifies major themes that emerged through analysis of the collected qualitative data. Chapter Five presents a summary of the study, a discussion and analysis of the findings, the implications, and the conclusions of the study.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

This study examines the experience of an Ontario secondary school classroom with a newly conceived Leadership in Social Justice Program, which aims to teach students the leadership skills required of social justice activists in an effort to promote social justice within the classroom and beyond. The program, in its conception and execution, attempted to apply a Freirean framework of critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970/1993) as a vehicle to achieve the goal of heightened social justice. Social justice, and the vehicle of critical pedagogy as a means to achieve heightened social justice, will be explored in the varied context of this case study to situate the program in its conception and execution against social justice and critical pedagogical frameworks. Although the program credits the influence of Freire (1970/1993), a lack of theoretical understanding of central tenets of Freirean critical pedagogy and a failure to establish a clear definition of social justice as a concept and as an objective may have hindered its effectiveness.

This literature review attempts to identify the importance of a clear, albeit complex, goal by pursuing an understanding of social justice through an exploration of the historical and theoretical foundations of the term. The goal of overcoming injustices creates a driving force for the pedagogical process of critical pedagogy. Theoretical foundations of critical pedagogy will be explored by highlighting key developments, themes, and theorists associated with critical pedagogy as it relates to the specific and unique context of this study. A focus on how critical pedagogy in praxis is executed will be explored through four themes: (a) roles and responsibilities of teachers and students, (b) the community in the classroom, (c) classroom pedagogical practices, and (d)

curricular content.   In addition, I will examine critiques and current applications of critical pedagogy in the educational context of Ontario. Importantly, with specific reference to the Ontario secondary school classroom, I will also explore the necessity of considering social justice in applications of critical pedagogy.

The Goal of Social Justice

A more just, equitable, and democratic society has long been a goal of educators as evidenced by Dewey's (1916/1966) focus on this topic beginning nearly a century ago. Teaching for social justice and equity is, for the most part, not explicitly mandated in Canadian curriculum documents, but in the same way that Schweisfurth (2006) suggests that the curriculum provides *permission* to teach global education, so, too, we can make the same argument about social justice. By permission I mean that in numerous curricular documents the notion of preparing students to engage in real world problem solving is mandated both implicitly and explicitly. This can appear in the introductory pages of a curricular document and sometimes examples are given as possible themes that can be taught to elucidate a learning expectation. Every curricular document gives, in parentheses, suggestions for topics that can be used to clarify the particular expectations. Teachers should keep in mind that what is offered in parentheses are suggestions only and they can substitute other topics of their choice that make these points. In short, this gives them permission to be creative. An example of this can be found in the Ontario Curriculum Documents (2009) overview of the grades 7 and 8 Arts curriculum:

> All students, especially young adolescents, need to see themselves in the material they encounter. They need to be able to choose independently to interact with

content that has personal relevance in their day-to-day lives, including material

that deals with issues related to fairness, equity, and *social justice* [emphasis

added]. (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009, pp. 131-132)

This is one example of social justice being addressed explicitly in the Ontario curriculum

documents; interpretation of curricular expectations that lack a direct reference to social

justice, with a social justice lens is also possible. An example of interpreting curriculum

expectations through a social justice lens can be found in the Canada and World Studies

Curriculum (2009) under the subheading Teaching Approaches which addresses

pedagogical processes with a social justice lens: "Canadian and world studies courses

lend themselves to a wide range of approaches in that they require students to research,

think critically, work cooperatively, discuss relevant issues, and make decisions about

significant human concerns" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009, p. 21). These

curriculum documents address both curricular content and pedagogical process with a

social justice lens and, in some cases, explicit referencing. Further justification for the

inclusion of social justice directives in the Ontario curriculum came in March of 2010

when the Toronto District School Board unveiled the Social Justice Action Plan to

encourage students to engage in positive social change both locally and globally. The

Toronto District School Board (2010), the largest school board in Canada, defines social

justice as:

A specific habit of justice that is based on concepts of human rights, equity,

fairness, and economic egalitarianism…. Social justice is, in plain terms, the

movement towards a more socially just world through the actions of a group of

individuals working together to achieve its goals. (p. 3)

This definition of social justice is based largely in the processes and actions of individuals acting collectively towards the common goal of a more socially just society. Cramme and Diamond (2009) explore the complexities associated with the definition of social justice and the extent to which a socially just society is attainable. The authors justify the continued debate to establish a working definition of social justice by highlighting the fluidity and complexities of the term:

> Of course the basic idea of social justice is inevitably contested since it is an ethical commitment, not an empirically verifiable end-state of 'ideal-type' society. While it involves ensuring that people are treated equally, at the same time the demands of social justice might require that people are treated differently according to the diversity of human need and capabilities. (p. 8)

While a fluid definition of social justice is necessary to utilize the concept in diverse contexts, a lack of parameters for the conception of social justice, and the individuals working together to achieve it, creates a lack of direction for students, teachers, and administrators. Establishing a clear, albeit complex, vision of social justice, a socially just society, and the responsibilities of people that would inhabit it is a necessary first step towards achieving it.

Finding Social Justice

Social Justice is not a timeless or static concept and has the ability to transform based on the changing economic and social conditions of society. Social justice grounds itself in Dewey's (1916/1966) articulation of freedom which views "social justice as seeking to unpack truths that challenge master narratives and unveils counter-narratives that often go untold or ignored altogether" (Miller & Kirkland, 2010, p. 3). Dewey's

belief that freedom can improve social conditions is foundational to the work of social justice theorists (Miller & Kirkland, 2010). In 1971, Harvard philosopher John Rawls published *A Theory of Justice,* which spearheaded the relatively recent exploration and debate surrounding the term. Rawls' transcendentalist approach attempts to create institutions that would ensure a perfectly just society. Sen (1992, 1999, 2009), in contrast, takes a comparativist approach, which focuses on the central concepts of capabilities and fuctionings to evaluate specific instances of injustice in a comparative setting to suggest justice-enhancing actions that would work to alleviate these injustices.

The work of Rawls (1971) aimed to articulate a set of general principles which underlie moral judgments, and to develop a theory which is superior to utilitarianism, which posits that justice is achieved when there is the greatest good for the greatest number of people, as a theory of social justice. Rawls suggests approaching social justice through the establishment of a social contract, a hypothetical agreement concerning social arrangements. To ensure this agreement is a fair one, Rawls suggests that each member of society must occupy the original position, a hypothetical situation whereby a veil of ignorance disallows individuals from recognizing their own circumstances and characteristics including race, sex, and social status, to allow moral and ethical judgments to be made impartially.

Emphasizing fairness, Rawls' (1971) theory of social justice included two principles as a solution to the primary problem of justice:

The first is "Each Person is to have an equal right to the most extensive total system of equal basic liberties compatible with a similar system of liberty for all" (p. 250).

The second is

Social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both:

(a) To the greatest benefit of the least advantaged... and

(b) Attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity. (p. 302)

Rawls' theory describes itself as a theory of social justice. However, while it has occupied the center of the philosophical stage since that time, it represents only one version of the concept. The impact of Rawls can be felt in more contemporary explorations of the concept.

In addition to establishing a basis of understanding for what it means to be socially just, why Rawls' *Theory of Justice* (1971) is of particular interest is the attention it received not only from scholars and academic journals, but from the popular press, leading periodicals of social commentary, newspapers, and news-magazines (Blocker & Smith, 1980). It is clear that continued interest in Rawls' work with social justice stretches across the boundaries of distinct sectors of academia and beyond the academic realm and into the public, initiating a pursuit of a greater understanding of social justice. This challenge is taken up by Amartya Sen (1992, 1999, 2009) in a way that is more applicable to this study.

Sen's (1999) notion of capability provides a sense of view of a multifaceted conception of justice and fills the void in Rawls' (1971) theory of justice identified by Wolfgang Merkel (2009): "What is missing in Rawls' theory 'is some notion of "basic capabilities": a person being able to do certain things" (p. 44). The central concepts to Sen's (1999) capability approach are capability and functioning. According to Sen

(1999), capability is a set of functionings subject to individual choice. Functionings are the various things an individual values doing and being (Sen, 1999). Examples of functionings include adequate nourishment, good health, being happy, having self-respect, and taking part in the life of the community (Sen, 1992). A definitive list of functionings is not in existence as different sets will be relevant to distinct groups in varied contexts. A person's capability is representative of the combinations of functionings (doings and beings) that one can achieve (Sen, 1992). An individual's capability is reflective of his/her freedoms and opportunities, the characteristics that enable people to do and be. This approach to a theory of justice is left intentionally open-ended to account for varied contexts. To achieve this flexibility of open-endedness Sen (1992) offers three areas of incompleteness: (a) the value of functionings or capabilities, (b) the issue of weight or priority given to different functionings or capabilities, and (c) the weight or priority given to different people in arriving at moral judgments. Applying Sen's capability approach requires that these incomplete gaps be filled (Qizilbash, 2008). This complexity may prevent the capability approach to identify one course of action as best, but may be able to eliminate a set of options that is worse. Those who seek a comprehensive conception of social justice must accept that justice is fluid, plural, and highly contextual, which makes identifying definitive parameters implausible. However, this complexity should not perpetuate an exhaustive theoretical journey to establish more definitive parameters. Sen (2009) stresses that although a clear, uncontested vision of a perfectly just society is impossible, action to alleviate injustice is very possible and preferred.

In Amartya Sen's (2009) *The Idea of Justice*, he charges Rawls' (1971) transcendentalist approach with sending philosophers on an impossible hunt for the perfect socially just society. This task is problematic in that it causes a theoretical battle of what a perfect world should look like, instead of working towards alleviating the injustices that can be identified here and now. Sen's (2009) comparitivist approach focuses on justice-enhancing actions by evaluating specific instances of injustice in a comparative setting and promotes work towards removing these injustices. I hold the view that the comparativist approach to social justice can be aligned with the infusion of critical pedagogy in current educational practice as a means to identify and attempt to overcome injustices within the educational institution and beyond. Keeping this in mind, an exploration of social justice in the context of education is not separate from definitions of social justice in the broadest sense. A socially just society is the overarching goal, and education as a vehicle for change is both a goal of social justice and an important part of the process of achieving it.

Exploring the Process: Democracy in Education

One cannot embark on a theoretical exploration of social justice and critical pedagogy without involving the legacy of John Dewey, as much of Dewey's (1916/1966) philosophy informed notions of social justice in education. According to Dewey, schools do not exist as a separate entity from society and school exists to involve students in an ongoing exploration of social issues. To Dewey, democracy is not only a form of government, it is a way of associated living, living together in joint spaces where individuals contribute to the construction of each others' knowledge formation in an attempt to fight inequality. A more just society can only be achieved when individuals

most burdened by injustice are involved in working for social change. Dewey's (1916/1966) *Democracy in Education* explores what democracy means for education and, alternatively, what education means for democracy. Dewey argues that the job of public schools is to create a democratic public capable of maintaining democratic communities. Students represent the future of democratic communities and, thus, schools act as sites of citizenship with educators as the primary stewards of democracy (Tupper, 2008).

The concept of democracy in education, much like social justice in education, is wrought with meaning and open to interpretation. Although "everyone believes democracy is desirable" (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004, p. 237), the definition of everyone's democracy is subjected to contextual variance. Democracy can be defined and enacted in a thin and thick way (Gandin & Apple, 2002) differentiated by the representative nature of the former and participatory nature of the latter. Thin democracy highlights political parties, electoral processes, and the structures and processes related to formal democracy (Carr, 2008). The thick version of democracy focuses on social justice and involves "a more holistic, inclusive, participatory, and critical engagement, one that avoids jingoistic patriotism and a passive prescriptive curriculum and learning experience" (Carr, 2008, p. 118). The key concern for the thick perspective of democracy resides in power relations, identity, and social change (Carr, 2008). Critical pedagogy and thick democracy share a common concern for fostering an understanding of power and difference among learners. Thus, critical pedagogy is a desirable vehicle through which educators can teach for thick democracy in the pursuit of social justice.

Educators can play a vital role in engaging students to identify problems, issues, and imbalances of power fundamental to the enactment of political literacy and critical

pedagogy. Carr (2007) emphasizes the requirement of educators to find a "sense of location" of social justice within democracy when considering democracy in education. In the active pursuit of social justice, the school's role as an equalizing force places pressure on both the institution and educators to effectively address and account for issues of social justice and equity. In most instances, the lack of focus and attention on social justice in relation to democracy in education at conceptual and applied levels "will have a deleterious effect on how students shape their own views during and after their educational experiences, and, significantly how they engage in democracy" (Carr, 2007, p. 19).

Exploring the Process: Critical Pedagogy

In the preface to Peter McLaren and Joe Kincheloe's (2007) *Critical Pedagogy: Where Are We Now?* Shirley Steinberg warns: "Sit down, open the pages, and do not expect to be relaxed – do plan to be uncomfortable: it is with that uncomfortability that we will teach" (Steinberg, 2007, p. x). Critical pedagogy embraces change and a serious interrogation of habit, neutrality, and common sense to educate for freedom. The prevailing pedagogical model is authoritarian which is hierarchical, coercive, and dominating while favoring the voice of the teacher as the privileged transmitter of knowledge (hooks, 1994). Authoritarian educators often devalue the personal in the classroom and talk about, "reality as if it were motionless, static, compartmentalized, and predictable" (Freire, 1970/1993, p. 71). This practice creates a barrier between students and teachers effectively disallowing any constructive grappling with issues of students' realities. Such educators who are resistant to mutuality between students and teachers and the notion of student participation, undermine education as the practice of freedom

by embracing pedagogical practice which, "dehumanizes and thus shuts down the 'magic' that is always present when individuals are active learners. It takes the 'fun out of study' and makes it repressive and oppressive"(hooks, 2003, p. 43). Critical pedagogy calls for a shift from authoritative practices to more critical and emancipatory pedagogical practices.

The multitude of existing critical pedagogical perspectives is representative of the recognition that challenging domination and the beliefs and practices that dominate, is not only ideal, but necessary in a democratic society (Daigre, 2000). The complexity of critical pedagogy is purposeful as it attempts to avoid specificity that would counteract the intentions of critical pedagogues that seek to, "avoid the production of blueprints of socio-political and epistemological beliefs" (Kincheloe, 2008, p. 48). It is clear that the legacy of Dewey (1916/1966) is felt in contemporary understandings and conceptions of critical pedagogy. For Dewey, students obtain a more holistic educational experience through problem solving and practical applications that allow students to take an active role in determining their positions within society. Social interaction is a necessary part of this experience, but is undermined by pedagogical practice that positions the teacher as the distributor of official knowledge. These issues are taken up by Brazilian educator Paulo Freire (1970/1993), who positioned critical pedagogy as an approach to address issues of power and injustice in adult literacy programs. Freire's exploration of critical pedagogy forms the basis of the contemporary understanding of the concept (Kincheloe, 2008). It is for this reason, coupled with the fact that the program under study is defined in Freirean terms, that this study will utilize a Freirean interpretation of critical pedagogy.

In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970/1993), Freire is critical of the "banking model" of educational practice, which illustrates and criticizes traditional authoritarian pedagogies. In the banking model of education, students are positioned as empty vessels to be filled by the teacher. Alternatively, Freire (1970/1993) positions the "problem-posing concept" of education as an ideal instrument for liberation and to disrupt the discursive power relations in the classroom. The problem-posing model strives for a classroom where meaningful dialogue, which is grounded in experience, results in new knowledge and opens up the possibility for the emergence of a critical consciousness. This critical intervention in reality, or conscientization, involves the questioning of commonly held assumptions and beliefs that lead to inclusive and exclusive educational practices, a necessary step towards humanization. O'Sullivan (2008) clearly articulates the Freirean concept of concientization:

> Freire's notion of conscientization is based on breaking the hold of the dominant ideology on subordinate populations as they learn to 'name' their oppressors and develop the ability to consider alternative ways of organizing society unencumbered by the oppressor's mode of thought. (p. 103)

Torres (2008) describes conscientization not only as a comprehensive challenge to banking education and a tool for social transformation, but also as "an invitation to self-learning and self-transformation in its most spiritual and psychoanalytical meaning" (p. 8). This dynamic process, a rethinking of past experiences, allows us to gain a better understanding of our own self and current position (Torres, 2008). This interpretation of the process of conscientization points to the development of one's own identity, in national and global spheres, as a crucial step in embodying a critical consciousness.

Critical pedagogy urges teachers to push students to be more skeptical of commonly accepted truisms and to recognize how these falsehoods limit their own and others' freedom. The primary preoccupation of critical pedagogy is with the alleviation of social injustice and a more democratic educational experience for all.

It is important to note that critical pedagogy is not exclusively tied to adult education. Contemporary critical pedagogues (Apple, 1982/1995; Giroux, 1988; hooks, 1994; Kincheloe, 2008; Macedo, 1994; McLaren, 1989; Shor, 1992) have interpreted Freire's conception of critical pedagogy and considered its potential for theoretical and practical application to a wide variety of educational contexts.

Uniting Diverse Viewpoints with a Clear Goal

The broad range of authors who explore critical pedagogy does not imply that they all belong to one unified school of thought. An exploration of key contributors to the development of the term that vary in their interpretation and suggestions for use are unified under the fundamental understanding that critical pedagogy is committed to highlighting the link between education and the possibility of social change. As McArthur (2010) maintains:

> Where disagreement occurs, rather than indulging in the age-old academic tradition of fragmenting into different camps (there are now countless different versions of emancipatory pedagogies) they need to engage in genuine dialogue. There is enormous latent change potential for critical pedagogy in the areas of dispute that are currently acted out either through empty polemics or putting up walls between those who disagree. (p. 494)

Similarly, Henry Giroux (1988) is concerned with the exploration of the interrelationships among categories and the development of a language of critique that opens up dialogue and interventions that are otherwise unidentifiable within a single narrative that represents a "language of critique, devoid of any language of possibility" (p. 204). It is important to note that although critical pedagogues offer diverse insights and at times contrasting viewpoints, the unified goal of critical pedagogy to create a more socially just world must serve as a driving force to unite efforts to make practical change. Peter McLaren (1989) echoes this sentiment in *Life in Schools* expressing that critical pedagogy does not, "constitute a homogenous set of ideas. It is more accurate to say that critical theorists are united in their *objectives*: to empower the powerless and transform existing social inequalities and injustices" (p. 160).

The Importance of Praxis

Peter McLaren (1989), a student of Freire, expresses that educators intending to facilitate critical pedagogy must also become critical theorists. This theoretical experience allows teachers to more successfully grapple with the complex relationship between knowledge, power, curriculum (both formal and hidden), and social reproduction while constantly and consistently engaging in self-reflection. A clear understanding of critical theory is an invaluable tool for critical educators poised to involve themselves and facilitate the involvement of their students in praxis. This importance of praxis is compellingly expressed by McArthur (2010) who states that, "Change will not just happen because it is needed or because it is right" (p. 502). Freire (1970/1993) addresses this sentiment through his commitment to praxis, an interplay between reflection that presupposes action in order to transform oppressive realities.

Praxis is an ongoing cyclical relationship between theory, application, and reflection that is translated into practice through dialogical process and problem-posing education (Freire, 1970/1993).

Critical pedagogy includes a strong agenda for change through praxis towards the alleviation of injustices in society. Apple (2000) urges educators to reject the idea of romantic possibilitarianism that focuses on critique while neglecting the importance of action. Strategic change that can be enacted in the real world is a necessary vital component of critical pedagogy, the theoretical perfection of which should be minimized to focus on what we can do to get there. This need to refocus theoretical perfection of critical pedagogy to concrete change can be paralleled to Sen's (2009) idea of comparative social justice. However, critiques of critical pedagogy that criticize a failure of theorists to provide teachers with a "how to" for critical pedagogy negate the essential idea that one cannot tell another how to do it (McArthur, 2010). The broad ideas and central tenets need to be challenged, interpreted, and reinterpreted within each context and by each educator. It is a way of approaching education, not a step-by-step guide. The following is an exploration of critical pedagogical praxis as it relates to themes of practical classroom experience (a) the roles and responsibilities of teacher-students and student-teachers, (b) the community of the classroom, (c) pedagogical processes, and (d) curricular content. This exploration is intended to help clarify the thematic elements of critical pedagogy in practice as they have been interpreted, reflected upon, and re-interpreted by the author.

Roles and Responsibilities of the Teacher-Student and the Student-Teacher

To engage in meaningful critical pedagogical practice a clear understanding of the theoretical underpinnings that inform this practice is necessary. This understanding includes, but is not limited to, a clear albeit complex vision of desired outcomes from the program, an understanding of how these outcomes will be achieved, and importantly, the roles and responsibilities of participants.

Teachers

bell hooks (2010) describes teachers as falling into three categories: (a) those who see teaching as an easy job with long vacations, (b) those who are concerned with transmitting knowledge that can be easily measured, and (c) those who are committed to helping students learn more by expanding their intelligence and experience. It was the third category of teachers that had influenced hooks the most, and can align themselves most easily with critical pedagogical practices. Critical educators must work towards their own well-being if they are to teach to empower students, "if the helper is unhappy, he or she cannot help many people" (bell hooks, 1994 p. 15). In the process of self-actualization educators must be conscious of their position of authority.

Challenge and change is implied as teachers and students embrace the struggle to overcome previously held assumptions. hooks (2003) warns that there will be some degree of pain involved in giving up old ways of thinking and knowing and embracing new educational approaches. It is important for teachers and students to be prepared for this pain as they engage in and with critical pedagogy so that when they encounter it, they have the resolve to overcome it. Teachers must also prepare to give up the need for immediate affirmation from their teaching practices as hooks (1994) learned from her

experience: "I learned to respect that shifting paradigms or sharing knowledge in new ways challenges; it takes time for students to experience that challenge as positive." (p. 42). The interrogating habits practiced in the classroom will build community, but may not evoke an immediate positive response from every individual. This does not justify reverting back to authoritarian teaching practices, which undermine the process of self-actualization. Self-actualization is the necessary first step in the creation of a critical educator.

Proving Leadership Without Falling into Authoritarianism

It is important, especially for teachers themselves, to recognize that in the classroom setting, teachers have more power than students. Educational practice is always directive; however, "the moment the educator's 'directivity' interferes with the creative, formulative, investigative capacity of the educand, then the necessary directivity is transformed into manipulation, into authoritarianism" (Freire, 1992/1996, p. 79). To avoid this authoritarianism, teachers must be willing to acknowledge this inequity and not engage in, "false notions that all our voices carry equal weight" (hooks, 2010, p. 56). A teacher must accept and acknowledge this hierarchy while simultaneously demonstrating that a difference in status need not lead to domination or an abuse of power: "In a democratic society where there is so much emphasis on equality, there is a tendency to forget that inequality does not necessarily mean that domination is taking place" (hooks, 2010, p. 114).

Educators must make a sincere effort to be self-reflexive about their authority by outlining the limitations of their knowledge. hooks (1994) demonstrates this by explicitly expressing her own limitations and by welcoming the contributions of others' experience;

she can do this, "without negating the position of authority professors have, since fundamentally I believe that combining the analytical and experiential is a richer way of knowing" (p. 89).

Students

Critical pedagogy in practice opens up a space where students have the opportunity to come to terms with their own power as critical agents of the world. They must learn how to question their daily experience, the common sense that surrounds their lives, and the very institutions that regulate society including schools and universities. Freire (1970/1993) emphasizes that critical pedagogy allows students to assume responsibility for their choices, and for their education. He expresses that in many contexts when students accept the struggle for humanization they should also accept "total responsibility for the struggle" (p. 68). Once they are confronted with the causes of the negative conditions in which they live, they can no longer passively accept these circumstances. hooks (1994) suggests that students rightfully expect that teachers will not offer them information without addressing the connection between what they are learning and their own life experiences. Students are not only responsible for themselves as critical agents but must also maintain expectations of the facilitators that lead them to their own conscientization. As agents of critical pedagogy, the

> teacher-of-the-students and the students-of-the-teacher cease to exist and a new term emerges: teacher-student with student-teachers. The teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach. (Freire, 1970/1993, p. 80)

The teacher-student and student-teacher exist in a mutual partnership that recognizes and celebrates their interdependence. Freire (1970/1993) describes this interdependence by articulating that

> authentic education is not carried on by "A" for "B" or by "A" about "B," but rather by "A" with "B," mediated by the world - a world which impresses and challenges both parties, giving rise to views or opinions about it. (p. 93)

Teacher-students and student-teachers are both subjects in the creation of reality and the re-creation of knowledge in the context of the critical classroom. Students are simultaneously enrolled in the position of teacher, and the teacher also fulfills the dual role of teacher and student.

Freire (1992/1996) describes the ethical duty of the teacher to respect differences in ideas and positions:

> What is not permissible to be doing is to conceal truths, deny information, impose principles, eviscerate the educands of their freedom, or punish them, no matter what by what method, if, for various reasons, they fail to accept my discourse - reject my utopia. (p. 83)

The teachers' "reading of the world" must never be imposed on the students, but can be presented to emphasize that there are other "readings of the world" different from the teacher's which are even antagonistic to it (Freire, 1992/1996, p. 112). The ethical duty of the teacher is especially important in controversial class discussions where teachers play a key role in facilitating dialogue by protecting diverse viewpoints, challenging unsubstantiated viewpoints, and suggesting how further information can be sought out. Ross (2010) argues that the teacher should offer a model of how to present viewpoints by

modeling how to make a series of compelling points to construct a sequenced argument, while avoiding pejorative and offensive language. In this process, it is necessary that the teacher presents his/her opinion in a way that "allows the class to respond, to rebut and to challenge them" (Ross, 2010, p. 157). hooks (2010) describes the role of the teacher in terms of facilitating the partnership that must exist between teachers and students: "Learning and talking together, we break with the notion that our experience of gaining knowledge is private, individualistic, and competitive. By choosing and fostering dialogue, we engage mutually in a learning partnership" (p. 43). This partnership will be discussed in an exploration of the importance of community in the classroom.

The Community of the Classroom

The work of cultural critic and progressive educator bell hooks (1994, 2003, 2010) is integral to highlighting the importance of the community of the classroom. hooks' anecdotal writing style relies heavily on her own experience to accessibly convey critical pedagogical perspectives to her reader, broadening the audience for this often highly theorized school of thought.   hooks' (1994) *Teaching to Transgress* argues for engaged pedagogy, holistic education that stresses well-being while also developing the theme of community building in the classroom taken up in her later work, *Teaching Community* (2003). The author's influence by these aforementioned works can be felt by their prominence in the following exploration of the classroom community.

Teachers Facilitate Communities

It should be noted that although the theoretical weight of an exploration of the theme of community in the classroom warranted a separate and distinct section, it is closely tied to the roles and responsibilities of the teacher in the classroom.   hooks

(2010) expresses the importance of the leadership role of teachers as facilitators in
fostering relationships that build community:

> Engaged pedagogy begins with the assumption that we learn best when there is an
> interactive relationship between student and teacher. As leaders and facilitators,
> teachers must discover what the students know and what they need to know. This
> discovery happens only if teachers are willing to engage students beyond a
> surface level. As teachers, we can create a climate for optimal learning if we
> understand the level of emotional awareness and emotional intelligence in the
> classroom. That means we need to take time to assess who we are teaching. (p.
> 19)

Many educational paradigms do not allow authoritarian teachers to recognize their
students, "as whole human beings with complex lives and experiences rather than simply
as seekers after compartmentalized bits of knowledge" (hooks, 1994, p. 15). hooks
(1994) recognizes that students are commonly perceived as passive consumers of
knowledge in what Freire (1970/1993) describes as the banking system of education.
From this standpoint, it is difficult to foster the sense of community. To overcome
banking education, hooks (1994) employs a Freirean critical pedagogy by embarking on
the preliminary task of building community and recognizing students as contextualized
individuals with varying experience.

Similarly, Shor (1992) explains that educators can create a "cultural paradigm"
that respects the experiences of students once they have undertaken their responsibility
to, "research what students know, speak, experience, and feel" (p. 202). By seeking a
greater understanding of the unique circumstances and emotional well-being of each

member of the classroom, the teacher is better equipped to foster a sense of community.

In *Pedagogy of Freedom*, Freire (1998), states that

> Affectivity is not necessarily the enemy of knowledge or of the process of
> knowing. However, what I obviously cannot permit is that the expression of my
> feelings interfere in the fulfillment of my ethical obligations as a teacher to
> exercise my authority. (p. 125)

Freire (1998) is perceptive to the emotional climate of the classroom, but still maintains authority, which is not the same as authoritarianism. While many authoritarian educators see no use for emotions in academics, hooks (2003) embraces the presence of emotion while warning that:

> Teachers are not therapists. However, there are times when conscious teaching –
> teaching with love – brings us the insight that we will not be able to have a
> meaningful experience in the classroom without reading the emotional climate of
> our students and attending to it. (p. 133)

The recognition of the emotional climate of the classroom is, according to hooks (2003), "the work of love" which allows teachers to be, "better able to respond to the unique concerns of individual students while simultaneously interrogating those of the classroom community" (p. 133). Love in the classroom does not make teachers less objective, but provides clarity to know, "what to do on any given day to create the best climate for optimal learning" (hooks, 2010, p.161). Teachers need not worry that a classroom based on love will lead to favoritism or competition between students because it provides the foundation for the trust needed to build a classroom community. Establishing this community is necessary for students to be fully and passionately engaged in learning.

Love humanizes the classroom, moves us away from domination, and "will always

challenge and change us" (hooks, 2010, p. 163).

Safety and Conflict

Reading the emotional climate of the classroom is an important prerequisite to

meaningful classroom experience. However, sensitivity to the emotional climate of the

classroom should not manifest itself in the protection of students from conflict or a

passionate dialogical exchange in an attempt to maintain safety. hooks (2003) does not

negate the need for safety in the classroom, but rather presents the idea of safety in a way

that implies that a shared commitment and a binding common goal will foster safety

through the creation of community. In contrast to the fallacy that we are all safe when

everyone agrees, "if we rather think of safety as knowing how to cope in situations of

risk, then we open up the possibility that we can be safe even when there are situations

where there is disagreement and even conflict" (hooks, 2003, p. 87). Often the pressure

to maintain an atmosphere void of conflict actually works to silence discussion and

passionate dialogical exchange, which works against the creation of a classroom

community.

Fear and Vulnerability

Critical pedagogues stress the importance of the community of the classroom and

the creation of a space where education can take place freely and without fear. This fear

can stem from the shame felt from previous classroom experiences:

> As teachers we can make the classroom a place where we help students come out
>
> of shame. We can allow them to experience their vulnerability among a
>
> community of learners who will dare to hold them up should they falter or fail

when triggered by past scenarios of shame- a community that will constantly give

recognition and respect. (hooks, 2003, p. 103)

Presently, many students, especially students of colour, do not feel safe in a

classroom setting (hooks, 1994). It is this, "absence of a feeling of safety that often

promotes prolonged silence or lack of student engagement" (hooks, 1994, p. 39). It is

clear that a lack of engagement not only negatively affects the learning experience of the

individual student, but, in turn, has a negative influence on the entire classroom

community.

A sense of community can be achieved by negating "dominator culture" which

has evoked a sense of fear in the classroom community and, subsequently, results in a

complacent classroom that shies away from risk and difference. When risks are taken,

which may initially be modeled by the teacher, students discover that they can be

vulnerable in this space of shared learning. A shared experience of vulnerability lays the

foundation for trust that a sense of community is built upon. hooks (2003) suggests that,

"moving through that fear, finding out what connects us, reveling in our differences; this

is the process that brings us closer, that gives us a world of shared values, of meaningful

community" (p. 197). When both teachers and students accept the responsibility of

creating a learning community together, "learning is at its most meaningful and useful"

(hooks, 2010, p. 11). In her own teaching practice, hooks (2010) does not begin to teach

before laying the foundation for building a community in the classroom by allowing

students and teachers to familiarize with one another, a process that can begin with the

simple act of hearing, "each person's voice as they state their name" (p. 20). Creating a

democratic setting where everyone feels a responsibility to contribute is a central goal of

hooks' (2010) transformative pedagogy, and this goal cannot be realized without the successful engagement of each individual.

<div align="center">**Pedagogical Processes**</div>

Teacher-students and student-teachers share in the responsibility to lay the foundation for the development of a sense of community through shared experiences and by engaging in critical pedagogical processes. The pedagogical processes of dialogue and problem posing are explored in greater detail in the subsequent sections.

Dialogue

The creation of a classroom community is facilitated by the pedagogical process of dialogue, which as a teaching tool is described by hooks (2010) as "awesomely democratic" (p. 44). Everyone engages in conversation, which can take place across race, class, and gender to position itself as a vital tool in the struggle for liberation. As hooks (2010) describes, "everyone remembers a good conversation where the back-and-forth sharing of ideas enhanced our understanding, the sharing of wit and wisdom stimulated our capacity to think critically and allowed us to engage in dialectical exchange" (p. 44). Conversation as a method of knowledge acquisition is hindered by a culture where individuals lack communication skills as a result of being passive consumers of information. This societal condition contributes to the feeling of a lack of voice by many students, who feel as though they are not worthy of being heard. This is why conversation is such a vital intervention, "it not only makes room for every voice, it also presupposes that all voices can be heard" (hooks, 2010, p. 45). However, dialogical and conversational teaching does not suggest that all voices should be heard all the time or occupy an equal amount of time:

> Understanding that every student has a valuable contribution to offer to a learning
>
> community means that we honor all capabilities not solely the ability to speak.
>
> Students who excel in active listening also contribute much to the formation of
>
> community. (hooks, 2010, p. 22)

This pedagogical process pushes educators to talk more with each other and with students to model conversation as a genuine location for rigorous thought; however, it should be noted that simply speaking is not the only way to authentically contribute to the conversation. Macedo (1994) notes that it is the responsibility of the teacher to create a classroom community that allows for silenced voices to be heard, but it is not possible for educators to give voices to their students, they must discover their own, which can be an intensive and lengthy process.

Dialogical pedagogy disconfirms a teacher centered authoritarian form of teaching and supports a process by which the teacher starts with student experience to engage students in a critical discourse about the issues. It is focused on and enacted in the work of Ira Shor. Shor (1992) sees the classroom as a venue for the construction and re-presentation of knowledge, not for its inculcation. The beginnings of a longstanding interest in dialogical pedagogy can be found in the context of higher educational practice and is explained as, "*for* freedom and *against* domination, as cultural action inside or outside a classroom where the status quo is challenged, where the myths of the official curriculum and mass culture are illuminated" (Shor & Freire, 1987, p. 12). In this context, the right to have small group discussion in an education setting is a class privilege, the more elite the student (distinguished by academic status or monetary means), the more likely he or she will have personalized discussion contact with the

profession/teacher. A dialogical pedagogy, which involves a facilitated exploration of topics of interest to the classroom community in every classroom, extends the reach of these benefits for a more just educational experience for all.

Problem Posing

Freire (1970/1993) positions problem-posing education, which involves a "constant unveiling of reality," as striving for the emergence of consciousness in opposition to banking education that "anesthetizes and inhibits creative power" which can maintain the submersion of consciousness (p. 81). In problem prosing, the teacher presents the material to the students for their consideration and in turn reconsiders earlier considerations as the students express their own (Freire, 1970/1993). The teacher can be seen as the problem poser, encouraging students to question existing knowledge rather than presenting knowledge as neutral, immutable, and universal. This concept coincides with the legacy of Dewey (1916/1966) and social problem solving whereby critical reflection must be coupled with action for greater impact. Freire (1970/1993) describes problem-posing in relation to dialogue and the resultant relationship between student and teacher:

> Through dialogue, the teacher-of-the-students and the students-of-the-teacher cease to exist and a new term emerges: teacher-student with student-teachers. The teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself [sic] taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach. (p. 80)

The teacher-student and student-teacher work in a mutual partnership to re-present their former static realities as a reality in process. Through this process, students are posed

with problems that relate themselves "in the world and with the world" and will feel

obliged to respond to the challenge because

> they apprehend the challenge as interrelated to other problems within a total
>
> context, not as a theoretical question, the resulting comprehension tends to be
>
> increasingly critical and thus constantly less alienated. Their response to the
>
> challenge evokes new challenges, followed by new understandings; and gradually
>
> the students come to regard themselves as committed. (Freire, 1970/1993, p. 81)

This critical dialogue, which precedes action, must remain a consistent practice

throughout the pedagogical process of problem posing.

Curricular Content

Critical pedagogy encourages students to critically examine their own lives and

the circumstances in which they live. This examination involves a close reading of the

curriculum with a critical lens and an exploration of generative themes and words, which

serve as motivation for students as they find relevance between learning experiences and

their own lives.

Re-reading the Curriculum

A necessary task of critical pedagogy involves re-reading the curriculum through

a critical lens to identify how it may breed inequality in the classroom. Shujah (2008)

identifies that the Ontario curriculum's "language, generic format, and standardized

testing are disadvantageous to anybody whose experiences and knowledge do not fit into

its fixed model" (p.352). Additionally, what the "standard curriculum, report cards, and

testing have been consistent in doing is to continue to breed inequality in education"

(Shujah, 2008, p. 352). However, the generic format of curriculum documents can be

positioned as advantageous to critical educators who use this lack of specificity to infuse desired curricular content and pedagogical processes. In this case, educators are granted permission to teach for social justice through critical pedagogy while still adhering to curricular guidelines.

Freire (1992/1996) warns against allowing curriculum content to be designated as magical because, "the more we look on content as something magical, the more we tend to regard it as neutral, or treat it in a neutral manner" (p. 111). He urges teachers and students to question the curriculum: "who choses the content, and on behalf of which persons and things the 'chooser's' teaching will be performed - in favor of whom, against whom, in favor of what, against what?" (Freire 1992/1996, p. 109). To ensure democratic teaching and learning, we must not only change pedagogical processes, but broaden curriculum context. A Freirean resolution to this problem would refocus the curriculum to the development of generative themes and experiential knowledge.

hooks (1994) identifies that "multiculturalism compels educators to recognize the narrow boundaries that have shaped the way knowledge is shared in the classroom. It forces us all to recognize our complicity in accepting and perpetuating biases of any kind" (p. 44). However, many educators teach in classrooms that are predominately White and are predominantly White themselves. In these settings it is "crucial that 'whiteness' be studied, understood, discussed - so that everyone learns that affirmation of multiculturalism, and an unbiased inclusive perspective, can and should be present whether or not people of color are present" (hooks, 1994, p. 43). hooks (1994) maintains that transformation in a homogeneous classroom is "as great a challenge as learning how to teach well in the setting of diversity" (p.43). The catalyst for a more inclusive

approach to curricular content, which involves an examination of Whiteness should be initiated by the educator to avoid a situation in which a student is compelled to complain about a lack of inclusion. As hooks (1994) describes, when students make a complaint about a lack of inclusivity in the curriculum, they are asked to make suggestions about the material that they would like to see included: "This often places an unfair burden on the student. It also makes it seem that it is only important to address a bias if there is someone complaining" (p. 44). Educators must take a proactive approach in addressing the injustices present in current curricular content to set a precedent of the struggle for liberation in the classroom.

Generative Themes/Experiential Knowledge

A crucial aspect of critical pedagogical practice is the employment of generative themes, a Freirean concept that aids in the development of a critical consciousness through the codification of complex experiences of experiential and political significance that initiate a dialectical exchange in the classroom (Freire, 1970/1993). Freire's (1970/1993) concept of generative themes describes the process by which students produce their own knowledge: "Thematic investigation thus becomes a common striving towards awareness of reality and towards self-awareness, which makes this investigation a starting point for the educational process or for cultural action of a liberating character" (p. 107). Through dialogue, students are encouraged to engage in a critical reflection of their own experience, which positions the student and the classroom community as the constructors of meaningful and relevant knowledge. In this process, the dialogical teacher must re-present the universe, not as a lecture, but as a problem. This further emphasizes the importance of attending to the diversity of lived experience as a counter

to mainstream, academic knowledge, and of student participation in the construction of this knowledge. The use of generative themes and words serve as motivation for learning as they give students the opportunity to critically examine their own lives and the circumstances in which they live. When students realize that they are capable of reading and naming their worlds, they question the circumstances that have been imposed on them and recognize that they have the power to change these circumstances (Macedo, 1994).

Critiques of Critical Pedagogy

While this study supports the use of critical pedagogy, it is also important to recognize critiques and challenges of critical pedagogy in the educational community. Critical theorist Elizabeth Ellsworth (1989) examined critical pedagogy through her experience in the classroom. She found that the complexities of local, historical, and social contexts existent in classroom situations could not be fully understood through highly abstract theories of power and oppression. She suggests that pedagogues recognize the need for students and teachers to work together across imbalance and difference rather than endorsing a classroom of harmonious consensus.

Burbules and Berk's (1999) exploration of critical thinking and critical pedagogy compares and contrasts the both competing and complimentary terms to ultimately conclude that each regards the other as insufficiently critical. However, this exploration of contestations to both critical thinking and critical pedagogy would argue that it is a hyper criticality that, in fact, impedes any positive action. Moreover, Burbles and Berk criticize what has the potential to be an indoctrination of students by critical educators who hope to promote critical thinking by allowing students to come to their own

conclusions while coming "dangerously close to prejudging what those conclusions must be" (p. 54). In addition, critiques of critical pedagogy are explored which position critical pedagogy as rationalistic in its reliance on an open dialogue that actually manifests itself in paternal conversation and include a feminist critique of the lack of female representation in visible figures of debate and the use of language that is at times exclusive. Similarly, bell hooks (1994) critiques Freire (1970/1993) for both the sexism in the language used and how he "constructs a phallocentric paradigm of liberation – wherein freedom and the experience of patriarchal manhood are always linked as though they are one in the same" (p. 49). hooks (1994) designates this oversight as a "blind spot in the vision of men who have profound insight" (p. 49) while maintaining that this does not negate anyone's capacity to learn from the insights. Admittedly, it is difficult for hooks (1994) to find a language to frame a critique of the work while simultaneously recognizing all that she values and respects from it. Drawing on Freire's (1970/1993) own model of critical pedagogy, hooks (1994) points out that Freire himself would welcome a critical interrogation of his work, which is not the same as a dismissal of it. Unlike many feminist thinkers that maintain a clear distinction between Paulo Freire and feminist pedagogy, hooks (1994) has "taken threads of Paulo's work and woven it into that version of feminist pedagogy I believe my work as a writer and a teacher embodies" (p. 52). It is important to note that although the influence of Freirean tradition, as described above, is felt in the work of hooks, her development as a theorist will inevitably allow her relationship with and interpretations of Freire to continue to develop. Burbules and Berk (1999) conclude their investigation of critical thinking and pedagogy by expressing that "criticality is a practice, a mark of what we do, of who we are, and not

only how we think. Critical Thinking and Critical Pedagogy, and their feminist, multiculturalist, and postmodern critics, apprehend parts of this conception of criticality" (p. 62). This concluding sentiment emphasizes that the necessity of a constant interrogation of critical thinking and pedagogy is, indeed, a crucial part of its conception and development.

The Pursuit of Social Justice in Canadian Classrooms

The banking concept of education negates the effectiveness of a critical pedagogy which insists that in order to teach for social justice educators do not only need a "knowledge of contemporary events, crises, economics and cultural patterns, but also the confidence to tackle issues which could be problematic in a fragile multicultural classroom" (Davies, 2006, p. 20). The banking model, discredited by critical pedagogues, is commonplace in education in Canada. Having established that opportunity exists to utilize critical pedagogy with the permission of Ontario curriculum documents, and the positive outcomes of critical pedagogical practices, an exploration of the potential to educate through critical pedagogy in pursuit of social justice in a Canadian context is explored.

Current teaching practices that address issues of social justice and equity are often reserved for more experienced students in secondary school and postsecondary education (O'Sullivan & Vetter, 2007). Dower (2008) argues that although there is a burgeoning need for an awareness of complex global issues in upper grades, it is important for students to recognize themselves as having a global identity at the primary age level. It is at this age level that students can begin to accept that in some basic moral sense they belong to the community of humankind. Through the establishment of leadership

qualities and a moral sense of responsibility, students are granted potential to continue to grow and partake in forms of active citizenship addressing issues of social justice (Dower, 2008). Vetter (2008) explores the potential to infuse global awareness and social justice in her Grade 1 classroom through the use of "rich talk." She theorizes that if children are able to engage critically with issues of social justice, equity, and diversity and are shown that their voices are valued and respected, they will at a very early age, "develop the ability to discern injustice and the confidence to speak out about social justice issues" (Vetter, 2008, p. 88). Through this exploration of teaching for social justice in the primary grades, it is clear that teaching with a social justice directive empowers students to develop a global identity, welcome diverse perspectives to take a major step towards, "creating an equal platform from which all students can expand their literacy skills, broaden their thinking on issues of social consequence, and inaugurate actions that demonstrate pro-active citizenship" (Vetter, 2008, p. 93). Infusing concepts of social justice and equity in primary grades is not only possible, it is preferred. It allows students to begin to recognize themselves as distinct individuals capable of affecting positive change both immediately and as they continue to develop.

Schweisfurth's (2006) study of the implementation of global citizenship education in Ontario secondary school classrooms suggests that highly motivated teachers are able to pursue global citizenship in their classrooms and they have the agency to do so. Teachers are able to "use" the expectations of the curriculum to justify the topic and approach "rather than to make their fulfillment the paramount goal" (Schweisfurth, 2006, p. 45). Educators who teach the curriculum through a social justice lens are successfully

maintaining their accountability while providing their students with the opportunity to explore existent inequities in various contexts.

Davies (2006) describes common educative practice of teachers addressing complex global issues as selective and inconsistent. The discomfort and unpreparedness felt by educators in addressing these issues in the fragile and diverse context of the classroom causes complex issues (e.g., racism, classism, sexism, ageism, ableism, etc.) to be negated all together. The unpreparedness felt by the majority of classroom teachers points to preservice education as a means to arm educators with the confidence to effectively address complex and fragile global issues in the classroom. Carr (2008) contends that in order to effectively teach about democracy and social justice, educators must have authentic experiences in the subject area and "be able to cultivate arguments positions and activities that will enhance the learning experience" (p. 127). Not unlike students, teachers need to experience democracy and social justice, not just be told about it. Teacher education must provide more experiential training to promote the conscientization of future educators and their engagement with critical pedagogy. Another concern for teacher education programs relates to dispositions: whether or not, and how, they can be taught (Carr, 2008). It is clear the ability to teach fragile issues of social justice and equity requires a confident and knowledgeable teacher to whom the students can relate. Further preparedness for educators through teacher education will increase the likelihood of social justice pedagogies enacted by educators that would otherwise feel inadequately prepared to broach such complex issues.

In the educative context of Canada, it is possible to teach for social justice in both primary and secondary classrooms and through preservice teacher education programs in

an effort to achieve heightened social justice. Although issues of social justice and equity

are not explicitly addressed in curriculum documents, through teacher agency and

motivation coupled with preparedness and professional development, educators can find

permission to teach through a social justice lens. A critical pedagogy is a necessary

enactment to facilitate conscientization in students and educators alike. This recognition

of discourses of power and self-identity in educators will serve as a catalyst for enacting

socially just and equitable teaching practice by providing the necessary agency and

motivation to make change.

A Goal and a Process

Bell (2007) describes social justice education as both a goal and a process: "The

goal of social justice education is full and equal participation of all groups in a society

that is mutually shaped to meet their needs,'' (p. 1) while, "the process for attaining the

goal of social justice . . . should be democratic and participatory, inclusive and affirming

of human agency and human capacities for working collaboratively to create change'' (p.

2). Fischman and McLaren (2005) note the significant contribution of Paulo Freire to the

development of critical pedagogy, which involves a critique of hierarchies of power and

privilege in classrooms, institutions, and society. Recognition of power inequities is a

formative step in the development of a critical consciousness, but is not enough to ensure

positive social change:

> What must serve as the genesis of such an understanding is an unwavering
>
> commitment to the struggle against injustice. Only by developing an
>
> understanding that is born of a commitment to social justice can such an
>
> understanding lead to the type of conscientization necessary to challenge the

hegemonic structures of domination and exploitation. (Fischman & McLaren,

2005, p. 441)

Learners must be fuelled by a commitment to social justice to fully engage in the process

of conscientization and to develop a critical consciousness, a necessary tool to challenge

dominant ideologies that function to dominate and exploit marginalized groups. The

ideas of Freire (1970/1993) and his contributions to the development of critical pedagogy

seamlessly intersect with the ultimate goal of social justice. This positions critical

pedagogy as a necessary and adaptive methodology to educate for social justice.

This understanding of social justice education as a theoretical end point and a

lived pedagogical process produces a, "synergy that elevates both scholarship and

transformative action" (Kincheloe, 2008, p. 12). In this context, transformative action

refers to a paradigm that moves us beyond theory to positive change. A strictly

theoretical approach to teaching removes us from the diverse and distinct range of

injustices and suffering of groups and individuals in the system of education. An

awareness of these injustices is necessary to engage in critical pedagogy as a lived

practice and process to work towards the goal of social justice.

A Hopeful Conclusion

A central tenet of the work of Paulo Freire (1970/1993, 1992/1996) is the

importance of hope in the critical classroom. Freire describes hopelessness as, "a form of

silence, of denying the world and fleeing from it. The dehumanization resulting from an

unjust order is not a cause for despair but for hope, leading to an incessant pursuit of the

humanity denied by justice" (Freire, 1970/1993, p. 91). Hopelessness dominates in the

way it silences, paralyzes, and immobilizes, while hope ignites a passionate pursuit of

social justice, a primary goal of critical pedagogy. Without hope we cannot initiate the struggle against injustice, but the idea of hope alone cannot change the world, it must be accompanied by an education in hope that leads to action (Freire, 1992/1996). Hope is the spark that lights the flame of critical pedagogy and it is the task of the critical educator to, "unveil opportunities for hope, no matter what the obstacles may be" (Freire, 1992/1996, p. 9). Hope must be an underlying tenet on which the community of the classroom is built and through which critical educators are motivated to make change.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

This chapter presents the research methodology and design, selection site and participants, data collection, data analysis and limitations of the research. A qualitative approach to this study was chosen to elicit both individual and collective meanings from the participants. Specifically, I have chosen to conduct this research through the lens of grounded theory, an approach that forms part of this qualitative research paradigm.

Research Methodology and Design

Creswell (2008) describes qualitative research as an inquiry approach that is useful for exploring and understanding a central phenomenon. Qualitative research focuses on context and process and relies on "the views of participants; asks broad general questions; collects data consisting largely of words (or text) from participants; describes and analyzes these words for themes; and conducts the inquiry in a subjective, biased manner" (p. 46). The process of doing qualitative research calls upon researchers to look at people (both those being researched and those doing the research), places, and events through a multitude of critical lenses. As a mode of inquiry, qualitative research "holds high expectations of its practitioners, not the least of which is its profound humanism" (Luttrell, 2010, p. 1). Qualitative researchers are expected to conduct their research with reflexivity, which involves the development of critical reflection skills through the acknowledgement of their "social backgrounds, relationship to the field site, theoretical and political leanings" (Luttrell, 2010, p. 3). Similarly, Creswell (2008) describes reflexivity as the process through which, "researchers reflect on their own biases, values, and assumptions and actively write them into their research" (p. 58). Reflexivity requires a constant effort by the researcher throughout the entire process of

data collection and in the representation of that data to enhance the accuracy, authenticity, and trustworthiness of the data.

Qualitative research is an appropriate approach to the unique context of this study because it allowed me to gain a greater understanding of the context and the process of the program that I was studying, the Leadership in Social Justice Program at Northridge Secondary School (a pseudonym). The opportunity to conduct this research arose while I was working as a research assistant for Dr. Michael O'Sullivan who was conducting his own research at the school and who served as my thesis advisor.

Qualitative research strategies are particularly useful when dealing with young people because they allow for spontaneity, a constant feature of the life experience of young people. This permits the researcher to explore variables that arise through both observation and data collection processes, which pose open-ended questions that invite participants to share their impressions and experiences. Grounded theory is a qualitative approach that "generates a theory when existing theories do not address your problem or the participants that you plan to study" (Creswell, 2008, p. 432). This study explores the complex and unique circumstances of the implementation of a program of alternate ways of teaching and learning in an Ontario secondary school classroom. The difficulty of anticipating the experiences of those involved with this study, coupled with a lack of critical qualitative inquiry in the area of infusing social justice directed critical education in Ontario secondary schools, necessitates new explanations for the process. It is for this reason that grounded theory is applied to this case study to generate a theory that can address the specific circumstance of this study.

Grounded theory is described by Creswell (2008) as a "systematic, qualitative procedure used to generate a theory that explains, at a broad conceptual level, a process, an action, or an interaction about a substantive topic" (p. 432). In most cases, researchers review data, code the data for emerging themes, and, subsequently, develop a theory to explain the findings. It is important that this process be initiated with an open mind and that this openness be maintained during the initial stages of coding (Alsup, 2010). The completion of a study that employs a grounded theory approach to data analysis will produce, "not only a discreet list of findings but also a theory to explain *why* these findings exist" (Alsup, 2010, p. 101).

I chose to draw methodological inspiration from the tenets of grounded theory, which garners power from "the researcher's piecing together a theoretical narrative that has explanatory and predictive power" (Charmaz, 2003, p. 327). Charmaz (2010) identifies Glaser and Strauss' 1967 article *A Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*, as a revolutionary work that popularized grounded theory as a foundation for data analysis. Glaser and Strauss' (1967) development of grounded theory in the late 1960s embraced the importance of generating theory from the participants being studied. In the years following their foundational text (1967), both Glaser and Strauss independently authored several books that explored and refined the initial conception of the research methodology (Creswell, 2008). Strauss, in collaboration with Corbin (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), introduced a more prescribed method of grounded theory, which can be described as a *systematic procedure*, to satisfy concerns about validity and reliability. Glaser was highly critical of Strauss' (and Strauss and Corbin's) categories and frameworks that restricted the development of emergent themes from the

collected data and subsequent analysis (Creswell, 2008). However, Charmaz (2010) criticized both Strauss' systematic procedure and Glaser's *emerging design* for being too systematic. Charmaz instead offered the *constructivist method* as a necessary alternative for grounded theory design which positions itself between systematic approaches to grounded theory and postmodern researchers who challenge the importance of methods (Creswell, 2008). Creswell incorporates samplings of systematic, emerging, and constructivist approaches to develop six characteristics applied by grounded theory researchers: (a) process approach (a focus on a sequence of actions and interactions), (b) theoretical sampling (choosing data collection techniques that will be useful in producing a theory), (c) constant comparative data analysis (inductive data analysis procedures that connect the data to categories and codes), (d) a core category (a code selected as the basis for theory), (e) theory generation (an abstract understanding of a topic grounded in the data), and (f) memos (informal note-taking by the researcher). As Charmaz (2010) indicates: "The researcher composes the story; it does not simply unfold before the eyes of the objective viewer. This story reflects the viewer as well as the viewed" (p. 196). These key characteristics of grounded theory research were considered in the conceptualization of the methodology of this case study; however, they were utilized as guidelines and not as a strict prescription for action. I have come to accept the approach of Charmaz (2010) to grounded theory and have endeavoured to apply it to the data that I have collected.

Selection Site and Participants

The site was chosen based on the opportunity for research that arose at a large urban Ontario secondary school. A research collaboration between my thesis advisor, Dr.

Michael O'Sullivan, and Northridge Secondary School teacher, John Hammer, was established and through this relationship I was granted access to the qualitative exploration of this exciting and innovative program as a research assistant. Data for this study were gathered jointly by Dr. O'Sullivan and myself after ethics approval was granted (see Appendix A). Data analysis was conducted separately for distinct and individual research purposes.

Northridge Secondary School

Northridge Secondary School is located in a large urban city in Ontario with a population of approximately one-half million according to the 2006 census. A 2008 diversity scan of the city states that one-quarter of city residents were born outside of Canada and that, "visible minorities grew from 10.9% of (the city's) population in 2001 to 13.6% in 2006, an increase of 20%. The visible minority proportion of the city's population is significantly lower than the provincial average, but the gap is narrowing" (Wayland, Bierling, & Abdullahi, 2008, p. 49). This diversity is reflected in the students of Northridge Secondary School; however, the students involved in the Leadership in Social Justice Program did not reflect this diversity. The student participants were, without exception, White and middle class.

Northridge Secondary School typically offers students a self-paced program. The central tenets of self-pacing are outlined in Northridge Secondary School's belief statements on their website, the central belief being that "students learn at different rates, and therefore complete work at different rates" (School's Website). Full courses are divided into 20 units, which translates into about 5 hours of in-class work. Units are outlined in Learning Guides, which are documents designed to guide the delivery of the

curriculum, and include independent, small and large group learning opportunities. The learning guide allows the students to progress at their own pace and to facilitate negotiations between students and teachers regarding timelines.

Description of Participants

Pseudonyms were used to protect the identity of the participants of this study. John Hammer, a White male aged 35-45, is the lead teacher in this initiative. His primary responsibility at Northridge Secondary School is teaching science, a subject in which he holds an advanced degree. John is experienced in local social justice activism. He is a member of the board of a local community co-op and spearheaded the Social Justice Club at Northridge Secondary School. John collaborated with Sarah Martin, a White female aged 35-45, who was a colleague of John's and shared an interest in alternative pedagogical practices. Rob Clark, a White male aged 35-45, is the current principal of Northridge Secondary School but was not on the school staff when the Leadership in Social Justice Program was conceptualized. The administrator who preceded Rob collaborated with John during the conception of the program. Rob enthusiastically supported the program throughout its duration despite, as will be explained, reservations he came to have about certain aspects of its implementation.

Recruitment for the Leadership in Social Justice Program began in the Spring of 2009. The majority of those recruited were grade 11 and 12 students who had been previously taught by Sarah and/or John. A few of the students had expressed an interest in social justice through their participation in the Social Justice Club, an extracurricular activity facilitated by John. The resulting group consisted of 23 students, 7 male and 16 female who were subsequently divided into five campaign groups established to pursue a

student-selected area of research interest. Many of these students demonstrated an interest in social justice activism and issues of social justice before they enrolled in the program; however, a small group of students had very little knowledge of social justice issues before becoming involved in the Leadership in Social Justice Program.

Data Collection and Recording

Data collection involved the following instruments and procedures: (a) initial questionnaire (see Appendix B), (b) follow-up questionnaire (see Appendix C), and (c) interviews (see Appendix D, Appendix E, Appendix F, and Appendix G). Dr. O'Sullivan and I administered a preliminary written questionnaire immediately after ethics approval was granted. The questionnaire sought to collect a sampling of data to establish an initial understanding of students' interpretations and experiences with the program. The questionnaire was completed by each of the students enrolled in the Leadership in Social Justice Program. The collection of data continued with a second student questionnaire to explore and clarify areas of interest identified from the preliminary questionnaire. Dr. O' Sullivan and I also administered the follow-up questionnaire, which was completed by each of the students present in the classroom that day. I reviewed both the preliminary and follow-up questionnaires to begin the process of open coding, which helped to identify emerging themes that were explored further in the interview process. Five individual interviews were conducted with selected students, one from each campaign group. Interviews were also conducted with the 2 teachers that taught the program, and with the school's principal. Dr. O'Sullivan was present during the interviews with teacher John Hammer and principal Rob Clark, while the remaining six interviews were completed by me in my role as research assistant. The interviewed

students were chosen based on their ability to articulate their experience with the program and to ensure that each of the five campaign groups (Homelessness One, Homelessness Two, Anti-Consumerism, Cafeteria, and the Political Campaign Group) were represented. By spending time in the classroom while familiarizing myself with the selection site and administering the questionnaires with the participants, I was able to establish a familiarity with the Leadership in Social Justice Program and the individuals involved, as well as foster the trust necessary for the process of qualitative in-depth interviews. Detailed field notes were utilized throughout the processes of data collection and analysis to allow me to remain close to the data and to elaborate on emerging ideas.

A Preliminary and Follow-up Questionnaire

The first, or preliminary questionnaire, was comprised of open-ended questions. Students that participated in the study submitted the questionnaire anonymously. The anonymity created a safe space for the students to express themselves truthfully but the use of open-ended questions gave the participants the opportunity to reflect on their individual experiences without being constrained by leading questions that might suggest the kind of answer expected by the researcher. Class time was allotted to allow the students to fill out the questionnaires at school. During this exercise the teacher left the class in the care of the researchers. Two students needed more time than was allocated for this activity and asked to email us their completed responses. However, by emailing the researchers their completed responses, student anonymity was compromised. This was a price these students were willing to pay in order to have additional time. Although students accepted their compromised anonymity, it remains a possibility these students may have censored their responses even though they accepted the lack of anonymity.

The first questionnaire included questions that aimed to give Dr. O'Sullivan and myself a clearer idea of the students' views of the Leadership in Social Justice Program and their experiences with the program to date. The first questionnaire was analyzed immediately after it was collected to inform the subsequent questionnaire. The subsequent, or follow-up questionnaire, was designed to clarify some points that arose out of the first questionnaire and to ask questions that had not occurred to us earlier. This procedure is in accordance with grounded theory methodologies whereby the researcher collects and analyzes data simultaneously in the initial phases of research (Charmaz, 2003). This process, which created a cyclical relationship between data collection and analysis, is facilitated by the qualitative researcher and is described by Charmaz (2003) as follows:

> [The researchers] explore and examine participants' concerns and then further develop questions around those concerns, subsequently seeking participants whose experiences speak to these questions. This process is repeated several times during a research project. Hence grounded theory methods keep researchers close to their gathered data rather than to what they have previously aimed or wished was the case. (p. 312)

This method parallels Creswell's (2008) concept of *constant comparative data analysis* which involves analyzing the results of the preliminary questionnaire before finalizing the second, and by analyzing the results of the second questionnaire before developing flexible guidelines for follow-up interviews.

The Interview Process

Selected participants were interviewed after the administration of two questionnaires, which also allowed the researcher to observe the classroom and participants during the administration of each questionnaire. The questionnaires, interviews, and some observation provided ample opportunity to construct a denser analysis of data and allowed for flexibility necessary in grounded theory research that requires that I remain close to the data. Charmaz (2003) provides further evidence of the ways in which in-depth qualitative interviewing coincides with grounded theory: "the combination of flexibility and control inherent in in-depth interviewing techniques fits grounded theory strategies for increasing the analytic incisiveness of the resultant analysis" (p. 312). While Charmaz (2003) explicitly refers to the connection between grounded theory strategies and in-depth interviewing techniques, I interpret the essence of his position as the need to gather data in an in-depth fashion. In the context of this study, two open-ended questionnaires combined with interviews amounts to an in-depth collection of data. Grounded theory provides researchers increased flexibility in this stage of data collection; they are concerned with emergent data, not a predisposed scripted response: "Interviewing is a flexible, emergent technique; ideas and issues emerge during the interview and the interviewer can immediately pursue those leads" (Charmaz, 2003, p. 312). When approaching qualitative interviewing with grounded theory analysis, the researcher is not yet aware of what, "the most significant social and social psychological processes are in particular settings, so they start with areas of interest to them and form preliminary interviewing questions to open up those areas" (Charmaz, 2003, pp. 311-312).

The interviewers' active involvement in the interview was necessary to allow for flexibility in the direction of questioning. A list of possible interview questions were brought to each interview to establish a sense of consistency, but I welcomed interviewee initiated tangents that articulated their individual experience with the program. Grounded theory interviewers ask questions to "explore not to interrogate" and frame questions so they, "explore the interviewer's topic and fit into the participant's experience" (Charmaz, 2003, p. 315). In the context of this case study, the questions needed to be general enough to cover a range of experience and simultaneously specific enough to tap into the specific and individual experience of the interviewee. Aléx and Hammarström (2008) argue that power relations are created in interview situations between the researcher and the participant. Interviewers, "face the major challenge of continuously raising [their] level of consciousness about power relationships, and discursive reflexivity offers one way to do this" (Aléx & Hammarström, 2008, p. 174). In this context I was actively reflexive by recognizing the inherent hierarchal relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee to avoid the negative implications of discursive power present in interviews which can produce skewed and/or incomplete data.

Interviews were conducted with 5 of the students, with both of the teachers involved in the creation and implementation of the program, and with the principal of Northridge Secondary School where the Leadership in Social Justice Program took place. Charmaz (2003) describes the challenge of grounded theory interviews that researchers are confronted with:

> A grounded theory interview can be viewed as an unfolding story. It is emergent although studied and shaped. It is open ended but framed and focused. It is

intense in content yet informal in execution – conversational in style but not

casual in meaning. (p. 326)

The intricacies of the process of grounded theory interviews described above provided

inspiration for the manner in which each interview was conducted. Each student

interview was in a one-on-one format between the students and myself and took

approximately 40 to 50 minutes. The interview conducted with Sarah Martin, the teacher

responsible for the Philosophy course, was also in a one-on-one format and the duration

was approximately 55 minutes. The interviews conducted with John Hammer and Rob

Clark, the principal of Northridge Secondary School, were conducted in a collaborative

format between the interviewees, Dr. O'Sullivan, and me. These interviews took

approximately 45 minutes. The interviews did not adhere to a strict timeline. Alternately,

the interviewees were encouraged to let their stories unfold as each topic was explored in

conversations between the interviewer and interviewee in accordance with the process of

grounded theory interviews (Charmaz, 2003). A semi structured format was followed to

maintain consistency while simultaneously allowing participants to articulate what they

felt to be important with open-ended questions. The interviews were completed during

the last months of the first semester of the 2009/2010 school year or shortly thereafter.

The timing of the interviews was purposeful in that it allowed interviewees to reflect on

their experience of the whole process of the program and also allowed sufficient time to

secure ethical clearance that was not possible at the beginning of the semester. Before

participating in the interview process, applicants were asked to read and articulate any

concerns regarding the informed consent form. Students that were not of the age of the

majority were sent the informed consent form prior to their participation and brought a

copy of the form signed by their parent/guardian to the interview. The one-on-one and collaborative interviews were recorded with the permission of the participants.

Grounded theory relies partially on the process of induction, a process whereby theory is formulated directly from the interplay between data collection and analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). A lack of prior investigation into the unique circumstances of this study requires an emergent theory to describe it. The purpose of the interviews was to gain a greater and more detailed understanding of the conception and execution of the Leadership in Social Justice Program as it was interpreted by the interviewee. Specifically, the purpose of the interview with the principal was to gain (a) an administrative perspective of the program, (b) a description of his involvement in its conception and execution, and (c) an idea of the positive and negative aspects of the program from his perspective. The purpose of teacher interviews was to gain a better understanding of the pedagogical practices that were implemented during the program, how the role of the teacher affected the program, and how they viewed the program at the end of the first iteration (i.e., what they might do differently, etc.). The purpose of student interviews was to establish a variety of student perspectives on the program including (a) whether it met their expectations, (b) its effectiveness, and (c) areas that could be altered to positively change the student experience. I employed in-depth qualitative interviews, which were conceived and executed under the influence of grounded theory.

Data Analysis

The preliminary questionnaire was administered immediately after we received ethics approval from both the School Board and the Brock University Ethics Committee.

At this stage in data collection, we followed Creswell's (2008) key characteristics of grounded theory that administers open coding strategies. Open coding involves an initial categorization of information about the data that presupposes and directs proceeding data collection. In the context of this study, the preliminary and secondary questionnaires were utilized to direct the proceeding one-on-one interviews through the process of constant comparative data analysis. After the secondary questionnaire was administered and the interviews were completed, I began to reflect on the data collected, and the preliminary analyses of data including the initial open coding. With this initial open coding in mind, I engaged in the transcription process. Tilley (2003a) identifies the complexities of the process of transcription in educational research by interrogating transcription work as a "truthful replication of some objective reality" (p. 751). A close examination of the transcription process and the constructed texts reveals the transcriber's interpretive, analytical, and theoretical influence (Tilley, 2003a). In this study, the work of transcription was completed by the researcher, which allowed for a closer examination of the collected data. When researchers delegate transcription work to others they can become "distanced from this piece of the process and often are not aware of decisions made on their behalf" (Tilley, 2003a). However, despite the researchers' involvement in the process of transcription, they must examine the trustworthiness of the transcription process as an "interpretive act" regardless of who is doing the transcribing (Tilley, 2003b). Researchers can strengthen the trustworthiness of data by providing transparency to the process of transcription by explicating the methods of transcription that were utilized. The process of transcription was conducted within a week of recording individual interviews, a process that allowed me to re-live the

interview and solidify the experience in memory. Upon completion, I reviewed the transcriptions for each interview comparing and contrasting student interviews, teacher interviews, and the administrative interview both as an individual document and within the collective narrative of the complete collection of documents. I reviewed this data several times while simultaneously noting areas of interest, contestation, and recurring and emerging themes by writing notes in the margins of the documents. This process gave me an overall feeling for the overarching narrative of the data to establish general themes before delving into a closer and more localized reading of individual documents. In this reading of both questionnaires and transcribed interviews, I scanned closely for established themes, newly discovered themes, and the emergence of causal links to explain the observed phenomena. From there I reviewed each document with the intention of locating a specific emergent and isolated theme by creating word documents for each theme and compiling excerpts from the collected data into this document. This process was repeated until each document was scanned for each theme resulting in several new documents organized by theme. Through this process, core categories were identified and utilized in grounded theory generation.

Limitations

The goal of the researcher was to collect data that provided a comprehensive picture of the Leadership in Social Justice Program from the diverse perspective of the involved parties – students, teachers, an administrator, and, in some instances, the community in which students' work extended beyond the classroom. After an initial open coding of the data, my goal was clarified to qualify how Freirean critical pedagogy was or was not implemented in conjunction with the goal of social justice, and the

resulting impact pedagogical processes had on the experience of the parties involved in the program through a qualitative case study grounded in the tenets of grounded theory.

Two of the most cited limitations associated with qualitative research are validity and reliability (Creswell 2008). The term reliability is most often applied to quantitative research and the idea is associated with both quantitative and qualitative studies. However, Golafshani (2003) identifies the distinction that "although reliability and validity are treated separately in quantitative studies, these terms are not viewed separately in qualitative research. Instead, terminology that encompasses both, such as credibility, transferability, and trustworthiness is used" (p. 600). Therefore, in the case of qualitative research, a demonstration of validity is sufficient in establishing reliability since validity cannot exist without reliability (Golafshani, 2003). Validity can be described as:

> A goal rather than a product; it is never something that can be proven or taken for granted. Validity is also relative: It has to be assessed in relation to the purposes and circumstances of the research, rather than being a context-independent property of methods and conclusions. (Maxwell, 2010, p. 279)

Maxwell suggests that making validity a central and explicit component of design can address the issue of threats to validity. Two broad threats to the validity of research are identified by Maxwell as researcher bias and reactivity, which refers to the effect of the researcher on the participants. The elimination of bias, or the subjectivity of the researcher, is not of particular concern to the qualitative researcher, but rather with, "understanding how a particular researcher's values and expectations influence the conduct and conclusions of the study" (Maxwell, 2010, p. 281). The practice of self-

reflexivity, becoming aware of potential biases, and how they have influenced the

research is a key task of a qualitative researcher that makes validity a central component

of the research in order to lessen validity threats. The threat of reactivity is present in the

context of this study because the researcher "is part of the world he or she studies - is a

powerful and inescapable influence; what the informant says is always influenced by the

interviewer and the interview situation" (Maxwell, 2010, p. 282). While there are

measures taken to prevent the undesirable consequences of this (avoiding leading

questions, creating a safe space for participants), it is most important to understand "how

you are influencing what the informant says, and how this affects the validity of the

inferences you can draw from the interview" (Maxwell, 2010, p. 282).

It should be noted that we entered into data collection while developing a

theoretical framework based in social justice and Freirean critical pedagogy. However,

we attempted to remain theoretically sensitive while collecting the data. During the

process of coding data I sought to be attentive to the interests of participants and in

collaboration with my supervisor and co-researcher, Dr. O'Sullivan, sought to direct

further data collection and analysis through a constant process of self-reflexivity. Glaser

and Strauss' (1967) ideal that established theoretical frameworks blind researchers to the

richness of incoming data does not necessarily apply to the unique circumstances of this

study. Rather, in the case of this study, it was necessary to understand and evaluate the

program that had claimed to be constructed based on this framework. When data

collection was complete, the theoretical framework was used to draw a parallel between

the collected data and themes present in social justice/Freirean critical pedagogy and to

explain classroom phenomena. The key characteristics of Creswell's (2008) synthesis of

grounded theory processes were interpreted by myself and used as inspiration to direct

my first involvement with grounded theory research.

The human experience of both participants and researchers subjects the collected

data to the biases of each. While Creswell (2008) maintains that the use of qualitative

research methodology encourages an understanding of a complex issue, the case study

offers a subjective picture of a specific educational situation. As a result, conclusions

from this study are suggestive and are neither exhaustive nor applicable to all situations.

This study is limited by the small sample of participants within a specific context and

cannot necessarily be applied to a situation with a unique context.

Conducting this research, getting into the literature, and writing this thesis has

been a tremendous learning experience. As a researcher committed to critical reflexivity,

I recognize the importance of identifying potential biases and challenges that may inform

my research, data collection and analysis. As I reflect upon my experience, several areas

of growth come to mind, one of which was how to conduct research in order to fully

understand aspects of daily life that few people outside of the academy consider to be

worthy of critical reflection. In this case, I am thinking of classroom practice as an object

of study. Related to this is my growth in understanding critical pedagogy and the

challenges facing those who practice it or struggle to do so. Of course, growth does not

occur evenly nor does it reach a point where there is nothing left to learn even in one's

area of presumed expertise. In my case, a challenge which emerged late in the research

process is the issue of Whiteness and the privileges associated with it. I recognize that I

was not adequately prepared to grapple with this complex issue and it is only now, at the

very end of the research process that I am coming to understand how deeply imbued

those of us that are White (and in my case, female and middle class) are privileged by our race (and class) circumstances. It was only at the end of the research process when I became aware of one article in particular (Tilley & Taylor, 2012) which helped me improve my understanding of the centrality of this issue when studying a program that purports to prepare students for engagement in social justice.

Susan Tilley and Leanne Taylor (2012) reflect on their experiences exploring issues of race, ethnicity and Whiteness in graduate classes composed largely although not exclusively of White teachers. Their efforts to encourage an understanding of race, ethnicity and Whiteness in the context of a classroom composed of many experienced teachers was part of a larger agenda they had to encourage teachers to teach for social justice through critical pedagogy. The authors take the position that an understanding of Whiteness is a precondition for teachers who seek to teach social justice and build "an anti-oppressive classroom environment" (p. 10). They note that in their experience, students, especially White students, resist "exploring elements of their identities" (p. 17). Despite the fact that this article studies the authors' experiences in a graduate class setting, I was surprised to note that their objectives as educators were very similar to those of the high school teachers whose program I researched. A significant difference, however, was that the Leadership in Social Justice Program did not include an overt discussion of Whiteness despite the fact that race is a key factor in the creation and preservation of social injustice. A lack of discussion about race in homogenous classrooms ignores hooks' (1994) observation that it is crucial for White educators, whether they are teaching in mixed race classrooms or in classrooms where the students are predominately White, "that 'Whiteness' be studied, understood, discussed - so that

everyone learns that affirmation of multiculturalism, and an unbiased inclusive

perspective, can and should be present whether or not people of color are present"

(hooks, 1994, p. 43). By not naming issues of White power and privilege in the critical

classroom setting, educators deny and make invisible these power inequities.

I suspect that the explanation for this omission in the Leadership in Social Justice

Program runs deeper than the simple fact that all of the students in the social justice

program were White. This caused me to reflect on my own status as a White female

researcher who has not seriously or systematically considered my privilege or racial

identity. As I began to conduct my research I did not consider my place in a social

structure where Whiteness automatically confers privilege. Consequently I did not

analyze how my status as a White middle class woman might be perceived by racialized

individuals. Indeed, I now understand that the fact that I have never felt compelled to

engage in such self reflection is itself evidence of the privilege that my status confers.

Similarly, just as the program's teachers omitted Whiteness from the curriculum,

as discussed above, I did not take note of, or deal with this absence until it was raised as

an issue late in the process of producing this thesis. As was the case with the teachers,

the issue of Whiteness was rendered invisible to me. I have since come to appreciate that

awareness of the issue of Whiteness needs to be infused into teacher education at all

levels and transmitted to elementary and secondary students in an age- and grade-

appropriate way. However, I am also aware that such a focus is not always easy or free

of tension. As Tilley & Taylor (2012) observe, their students engaged in widespread

resistance to dealing with the topic of Whiteness and its associated privileges. They

address some of these challenges in their observations that when their students were

offered the opportunity to analyze Whiteness and its resulting privileges they often

sabotaged their instructors' efforts. Not only did students tend to resist the topic, but the

authors point out that many students were also uncomfortable with the concept of critical

pedagogy. They suggest that the reason for the discomfort of the White students to the

discussion of Whiteness and to critical pedagogy is that both topics challenge their deeply

held world views that justify their own privileged status and that of the institutions within

which they work and go to school.

Such observations could well lead to a conclusion that the prevailing neoliberal

ideology with Whiteness at its core is so pervasive that even progressive White teachers

committed to social justice agendas are rendered incapable of effectively teaching for

social justice as it seems to be very difficult to come to terms with the privileges that they

enjoy not only as Whites but as socio-economically advantaged, highly educated

individuals. Despite these challenges, I believe that schools can employ critical

pedagogies that in the words of Weiler (1998) recognize "the limitations of what is

possible to achieve in the classroom" while recognizing the "value and importance of

doing what is possible" (cited in Tilley and Taylor, p. 21). The two teachers who offered

the Leadership in Social Justice program overlooked any number of important elements,

as did I in analysing their experience, but the space, referred to in the title of this thesis,

offers the possibility of continuing to tackle these issues both at the level of teacher

education programs and in the elementary and secondary classrooms where the important

work of teaching for social justice must take place.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

This study was undertaken to investigate the experience of students, teachers, and an administrator in an Ontario secondary school with respect to the conception and execution of an integrated Leadership and Social Justice Program. Specifically, it explores how the strengths, weaknesses, and emergent points of interest of what is purported to be a Freirean interpretation of critical pedagogy are applied to classroom practice as a means to achieve the goal of heightened student awareness of, and engagement in, social justice. An exploration of the efforts of students and teachers in the Leadership in Social Justice Programs requires a clarification of the issue of action in this unique context. Action, in this context of this study, refers to a paradigm that moves participants beyond theory to experience issues of social justice by engaging in authentic learning opportunities. Although action is not exclusively tied to political engagement, the social justice directive of this program implies that students will grapple with highly politicized issues. In order for students to partake in praxis, the interaction between theory and reflection that presupposes action in order to transform oppressive realities (Freire, 1970/1993), they must be provided with the opportunity to critically reflect on their knowledge and demonstrate a deep understanding of given issues to engage in meaningful action. In critical pedagogical practice, it is clear that teachers play a vital role in encouraging students to become aware of themselves as critical agents as a result of their educational experiences. However, it is difficult to define the parameters of teachers' involvement in encouraging students to engage in action, and more specifically politicized action. Establishing appropriate action in the Leadership in Social Justice classroom identifies a challenge and a possibility of enacting critical pedagogy with a

social justice directive within the restrictions of an educational institution. Educators must take up this challenge by interpreting and reinterpreting appropriate and purposeful action within the unique circumstances of each context and by each educator.

In reviewing the relevant literature surrounding critical pedagogy with a social justice directive, evidence suggests that the practical application of critical pedagogy in the Ontario secondary school classroom can be limited by romantic possibilitarianism. Romantic possibilitarianism occurs when a highly theorized dialogue takes precedence over action and thereby reduces or eliminates the potential of critical pedagogy and social justice methodologies to be used in real world struggles for social change (Apple, 2000). Thus, more effort must be put forth to ground critical pedagogical discourse in the concrete struggles of multiple and identifiable groups (Apple, 2000). When multiple critical pedagogies are articulated and exemplified, a precedent is set for students and teachers to shift educational paradigms and make positive change. As hooks (1994) suggests, the presentation of "concrete strategies" by fellow educators helps to "dispel [the] fears" of educators that hope to make positive change (p. 38). It is difficult, but not impossible, for both students and teachers to shift paradigms from authoritarian teaching practices towards pedagogical strategies that will help to dispel injustice. This study hopes to expand the space of critical pedagogy in practice so that critical pedagogy need not remain so exclusively in the realm of theory. To better understand the experience of students, teachers, and an administrator in the conception and execution of this program, qualitative research methodologies, including aspects of grounded theory methodology and analysis, were implemented. Two student questionnaires were conducted in addition to eight in-depth qualitative interviews with 5 students, the 2 teachers involved in the

program and the administrator of Northridge Secondary School. This chapter begins with

a description of the Leadership in Social Justice Program and a description of how the

program was conceived and organized which is followed by a presentation of the major

themes that emerged from an analysis of the collected qualitative data. Themes are

supported by data collected from student questionnaires and interview transcripts and are

discussed under five main headings: The Challenge of Change, Building Community in

the Classroom, Finding and Following a Student Voice, Issues of Power and Authority,

and The Impact of the Leadership in Social Justice Program.

The Leadership in Social Justice Program

The Leadership in Social Justice Program, a four credit, semester long, and

integrated grade 12 program was conceived and advocated by one of the school's

teachers, John Hammer, who worked in collaboration with a colleague, Sarah Martin, and

the administration of Northridge Secondary School. The Northridge Secondary School

website described the Leadership in Social Justice Program as giving students who are

interested in current events and social issues a unique opportunity to:

- Learn how social movements have shaped their world;

- Hear from people in their community who are working to create a more just
  society;

- Acquire skills and experience that will make them more effective participants in
  community organizations;

- Participate in campaigns for social change that are meaningful and authentic
  (School's Website).

Sarah taught a single credit course entitled Philosophy: Questions and Theories while John was responsible for the remaining three credits, which were: Canadian and World Politics, Leadership and Peer Support, and Leadership in Social Justice. The Leadership in Social Justice course was developed by John using the provisions of the Ontario curriculum that allow courses that form part of a program to be developed so long as they use expectations found elsewhere in the curriculum. The development of this course demonstrates a level of flexibility that allows creative teachers in Ontario to explore issues not otherwise covered by pre-existing courses. Although the four credits were segmented to adhere to curricular guidelines, the subject matter, particularly of the three courses John taught, was largely integrated to allow for and to encourage cross-curricular connections.

Conception and Organization of the Leadership in Social Justice Program

The Leadership in Social Justice Program was conceived and advocated by lead teacher John Hammer, in collaboration with teacher Sarah Martin and Rob Clark, principal of Northridge Secondary School. Each individual played a distinct role in the program's development.

John's Role

John, whose educational background and teaching experience is in the natural sciences, had not previously developed a social sciences curriculum, particularly one that offered an integrated approach with a critical pedagogical intent. As a result, he sought the support from his school's administration, fellow teacher Sarah Martin and the Faculty of Education at Brock University. Brock academics were invited to respond to, and make recommendations about, John's plans in the months preceding the start of the school

semester and to document the program and publish the results as a means of constructive reflection. Several Brock professors indicated an early interest in this collaboration but in the end only Dr. O'Sullivan conducted research on site in which I participated as a research assistant. The program's lead teacher, John, self-describes as being deeply influenced by Freire. He was motivated by the possibility of infusing tenets of social justice in credited course work. John's conception of the Leadership in Social Justice Program included teacher facilitated/student-directed lessons and encouraged students to pursue their own learning directives through their choice of campaign groups. The campaign groups consisted of 4-5 students and were organized by a central social justice theme as defined by each distinct group. The five campaign groups were guided by these themes both in classroom and community engagement. Work on the campaign groups was exclusively conducted in the three credit classes for which John was responsible. Sarah's Philosophy module did not intersect directly with these activities.

Sarah's Role

Sarah's Philosophy course, which constituted the fourth credit of the Leadership in Social Justice Program, accounted for one period of each day. She explained her belief that John had invited her to collaborate with him on this program because, as she put it, "he knew that I was kind of disengaged from how the students at the school were learning" (Interview with Sarah Martin conducted on May 21, 2010). John stated that both he and Sarah "needed something that was a little bit more authentic and opened more possibilities for the students" (Interview with John Hammer conducted on February 17, 2010). While John identified his desire to embark on a new educational paradigm, at the same time he admitted that "I didn't know how that should happen." Sarah identified

John as the driving force behind the program and saw herself going "along for the ride." She described this role as "a great place to be" because "you get taken places you weren't expecting to go, but even the structure of the program was something that I hadn't anticipated it being the way it was." Sarah's original vision of the program had a strong emphasis on "building communities between students and nonprofit organizations," but she recognized that in practice, in most cases the students did not create community partnerships. Although Sarah's involvement during the implementation of the program was restricted to the Philosophy component of the course, she was also involved in the process of developing a functioning timetable with the intent of promoting cross-curricular connections. The timetable that was developed allowed for flexibility if Sarah needed more time with the group than the one period she was allotted each day. John and Sarah achieved this by having Sarah teach the Philosophy module in period one, followed by the student's period two lunch, then Sarah's prep. If Sarah needed more time with the students, John and Sarah could, as John put it, "trade off time" for another period in the day.

Rob's Role

Rob Clark, principal of Northridge Secondary School throughout the program's duration, described his role in the conception of the Leadership in Social Justice Program as being "twice removed from that beginning concept phase" (Interview with Rob Clark conducted on February 24, 2010). Conversations about the idea of a Social Justice Program at Northridge Secondary School began the year before the initial pilot program, when Rob was the principal at a different secondary school. The administrator that preceded Rob engaged in a discussion with John about what a social justice course would

look like in the context of Northridge Secondary School. From this discussion stemmed the idea of developing a program of choice that invited students from across the board to participate. The former school administrator supported John during the application and funding process before Rob took on the role of administrative support when the school year began and the former school administrator had left the school. Rob described his partnership with John and Sarah:

> I was very involved with John and to a lesser extent, Sarah, because of the role she played in the classroom, but [I engaged with] the two of them in talking about what structures needed to be in place in order to successfully run this program from a school perspective. [We discussed] what structures they needed to immediately include and then what did we need to include for going forward.

Although Rob's involvement with the Leadership in Social Justice Program began after its initial conception, his support throughout the program's duration was invaluable. Rob provided consistent administrative support to both the students and the teachers involved in the program and admitted he was "much more involved than I thought I was going to be." Like any newly conceived and implemented program, "we have all of our bumps along the way and our celebrations along the way" but in the end Rob described the experience as a "great opportunity for students."

The Campaign Groups

The campaign groups were an aspect of the program that allowed students to direct their own learning towards social justice issues. While students were invited to join these groups based on their research interests, in fact, many students were attracted to groups based on established friendships and then, after the group was established,

agreed upon a research interest. Scott revealed that he was initially interested in his campaign group because he "only cared about getting good marks" and the students in the group he selected were known "for having good marks." The research interest on which each group chose to collaborate directed their learning for a significant portion of the course.

The work conducted within the framework of the campaign groups made up the bulk of student work in the three credit courses that were supervised by John. Once the groups had agreed upon a theme to drive their campaign, they began to use class time to explore and expand their knowledge on the topic. As they became more familiar with the topic, students were required to present their ideas to an audience beyond the classroom, either in the school or in the community, in hopes of sharing their newly acquired knowledge of the issue and to make an impact in the community or school.

One group, which became known as the anticonsumerism group, chose to focus on issues of branding and consumerism. Two campaign groups chose to deal with the issue of homelessness and came to be known as Homelessness Group One and Homelessness Group Two, respectively. Despite having chosen the same topic, the two Homelessness groups chose to focus their campaign towards different audiences. Group one sought to make an impact in the surrounding community in which the school was located, by collaborating with a local homeless shelter. Group two hoped to bring the issue of homelessness to the students and staff of Northridge Secondary School.

The self-named Cafeteria Group dealt with nutritional issues in general and specifically focused on the food served in the school's cafeteria. The Politics Group sought to explore connections between corporate donations to municipal politicians and

their voting records on council. This group also had an interest in local clean transportation initiatives. Throughout the course of the semester, this group had difficulty infusing the theme of social justice.

In addition to presenting their findings to a wider audience, each group had to prepare a final paper outlining their research, their findings, and their efforts in the community.

Motivation to Enroll in Leadership in Social Justice Program

The 23 students enrolled in the Leadership in Social Justice Program varied in their motivation to take part in the program. Josh observed that most "17-year-olds are bored with traditional school and would want a change." Stacy identified herself as one of these students and she described herself as being "flat out bored with the same thing every single day." This program, she said, offered something "new and different." Shannon felt frustrated by formal schooling "where the teachers and students cannot openly discuss opinions" and valued the opportunity to experience "a greater thought process in a classroom where students can challenge the teacher's thoughts and vice versa." Amy also expressed frustration towards her previous educational experience but, unlike Shannon, directed this frustration towards her peers: "I take a dim view of my peers. The thoughtful individuals are vastly outnumbered by an oblivious horde intent on securing their next shot of the societal Kool Aid." Amy was confident that the peer group involved in the Leadership in Social Justice Program would consist of "thoughtful individuals." For many students, the Leadership in Social Justice Program offered a desired alternative to individual frustrations with "traditional school."

The Challenge of Change

Despite Northridge Secondary School's culture of self-pacing, the Leadership in Social Justice Program was not self-paced. Each student was expected to attend class to contribute to collaborative discussion and to hand in assignments within set time constraints. The students that entered the program were not accustomed to the discipline associated with group work and imposed timelines. Many students found it difficult to transition from a culture of self-pacing to a program where the expectations of the teacher included the completion of course work by the semester's end.

Moving To and From "Untraditional Schooling"

Student participants identified the student-directed Leadership in Social Justice Program as untraditional education in comparison to their previous traditional educational experiences. However, the standard of self-pacing at Northridge Secondary School that students had previously engaged in is hardly traditional by the standards of education in Ontario. Student's experienced a shift from an alternative and individualistic program they identified as traditional, to an alternative program that focused on cooperation and enforced deadlines for work. The shift from what student's described as their previous traditional educational experience to the untraditional experience and back resulted in some difficulty for the student participants experiencing this transition. Richard had difficulty shifting from the school's self-paced system to the Leadership in Social Justice Program:

> Perhaps because of the abrupt shift from the traditional system to this, I find that I still rely on a certain amount of structure, in the form of tracking sheets, calendars, and the like. What it boils down to for me is the fact that despite the

comprehensive freedom and general liberal attitude within the class, there are still

marks being assigned and these marks grant entrance to university. This was

more pronounced during the first month or two.

Fred expressed frustration with what he called the lack of organization regarding the

expectations of the course:

The first month was sort of getting settled down in the class, and then Hammer

got angry because we hadn't started the campaign and then … 2 days [after] we

had started the campaign … we were expected to have done something.

James explained the lack of organization resulting from the misguided expectations of the

teacher:

Mr. Hammer seems to assume we'll become motivated if we're allowed free reign

and "invest" in the course. Unfortunately, it just feels wishy-washy and

unfocused. He tells us to "pick a cause" and "do whatever", which ultimately

leaves us lost and, most important, doesn't help us learn.

I mainly conducted the interviews after the completion of the Leadership in Social

Justice Program whereby student participants had returned to the routine of their regular

school programs. Sarah told me that students voiced their frustrations to her after having

to face traditional classes following their experience in the Leadership in Social Justice

Program. She explained that a lot of the students suggested that we should switch social

justice to be in second semester because they found the transition back to the regular

program to be so difficult. Similarly, John described the students as being, "very antsy,

itchy in their traditional classes." Katherine described her student peers in the Leadership

in Social Justice Program as "shocked" by their return to self-paced schooling. Andrea reflected this when she said:

> I definitely don't regret taking it or anything like that because it was an amazing experience, like I learned so much more than I ever would in any other course, but it was definitely difficult and it is difficult to get back into a regular system.

Scott also experienced problems adapting to the workload of courses following the Leadership in Social Justice Program: "The workload is heavier, and I don't know where educators got the idea, the heavier the work load the more the kids learn." Scott described this notion as "completely flawed" and explained that in the Leadership in Social Justice Program, "you actually care about knowing things because like there isn't such a heavy workload, that all you care about is getting the work done." Scott described his return to "traditional schooling" after his experience with the Leadership in Social Justice Program as "dry" and "lacking any substance." He felt as though he did not fully understand the material and when teachers presented information to him he would "absorb it like a sponge, but look at it and think 'this doesn't matter,' because this isn't going to help anyway." However, as a result of his experience with the Leadership in Social Justice Program, Scott also gained a new understanding of the traditional education that he returned to after the program's completion:

> But now that I hate school, I go because another lesson social justice taught me ... while it is important to do what you desire rather than conforming to what other people want you to do, it's also important to have your needs met. And in order for me to have my needs met, I have to go to school.

Although in many cases the student experience with the Leadership in Social Justice Program has led to an enhanced ability to express criticism of traditional schooling, for Scott, it convinced him, perhaps ironically, of the importance of education, regardless of how traditional he found it.

Motivation to Learn: From Making the Grade to Making a Difference

For many of the students involved in the Leadership in Social Justice Program, motivation to succeed in the course had little to do with the marks that would be allotted at the end of the semester. Katherine, who initially voiced concern about how she would be assessed for her efforts throughout the program became motivated by the success of her campaign and its impact on the community:

> It wasn't so much about the mark, it was about our success and the success of our campaign and how we impacted other people. Like it wasn't like okay, write a test, here's the mark, it was real. We were marked based on how we got out there and how we impacted people and so it was definitely a different motivation. It wasn't a motivation to study and do well on the test, it was the motivation to succeed and be better people.

Scott, who was initially only interested in "making the mark" and chose the members of his campaign group based on their reputation for having good marks, changed his motivation as the course progressed. Scott's motivation to succeed changed and after the midterm he "didn't check my mark once, I didn't care." For Scott, the ability of his Homelessness Two campaign group to make positive change, outweighed his concern to "make the mark."

Fred identified that the relevance of the course content to his life and interests was his motivation to further his learning: "I've found from experience if I'm interested in something then the marks take care of themselves." In the Leadership in Social Justice Program Fred found that learning became

> not a part of my regimen but a part of second nature like in the same way that I would just pick up a crossword book and do a crossword I would sit down and learn something... whatever they were teaching. I don't know. Whereas in the traditional education or whatever it's sort of get it out of the way and then do whatever you want.

Alexis described this type of learning as "learning for yourself" as opposed to "learning for school." In the Leadership in Social Justice Program, Alexis felt "encouraged to better myself and so I want to reflect that in my work, whereas before I would just hand things in because I needed the unit and the mark." Scott described his learning experience as more meaningful, "I've had a more meaningful education than I've had in my entire life."

Many students that were initially driven to "make the mark", which was an appropriate path for success in their previous educational experiences, underwent a change in motivation throughout the Leadership in Social Justice program. Students placed less emphasis on the need to make the mark, but rather began to "learn for themselves," and were motivated "to succeed and be better people." Students identified the Leadership in Social Justice program as an educational experience that offered a different and more personal motivation than traditional schooling. This shift in

motivation made it difficult to return to traditional schooling where "learning for school" often garners more academic success than "learning for yourself."

Building Community in the Classroom

When asked: What do you value most about the Leadership in Social Justice Program? a significant portion of participants cited a "sense of community." A heightened sense of community in the classroom was felt by the majority of student participants, with the exception of a small minority of students who felt alienated from the community that had formed. Amy claimed that, "This class marks the first time I've been part of genuine camaraderie, which I think comes from having meaningful interactions with other thoughtful people rather than traditional pedagogy." James valued "the way the course brings the students together, whereas others would just isolate us and then blind-side us with 'group assignments' which require a certain chemistry we don't have." However, in relation to her feelings of community at Northridge Secondary School as a whole, Andrea felt as though this sense of community was not confined to the walls of the social justice classroom noting that Northridge Secondary School is not a "regular school" and that most "students at [Northridge] have a sense of community already."

Alexis, too, spoke of the sense of community she found in the Leadership in Social Justice Program, but unlike Andrea she contrasted it with regular classes. For example, as she noted in her written reflection:

> It's hard to build a community in a class you have for one period a day. Most people are there to put in their time and then they leave. This class offered the time, space, and freedom (not the same structure) to build a community.

Alexis's commitment to the Leadership in Social Justice Program was exceptional as evidenced by what she had to do in order to take it. Because of timetabling issues, if she took the Leadership in Social Justice Program, she could not take two required courses that she needed in order to apply for the university program she had in mind. Rather than forgo the Leadership in Social Justice Program, she took summer school classes to get the credits she needed for her university application, thus clearing the way for her to enroll in the program that intrigued her so much. Alexis never regretted her decision to make room in her schedule for the Leadership in Social Justice Program.

Alexis also identified that the peer group in the Leadership in Social Justice classroom was atypical from her other Northridge Secondary School experiences:

> The environment was positive, comfortable, relaxed... you didn't have to worry about what you were wearing or about what you said. You didn't have to worry at all. And there wasn't this typical... in comparison to normal high-school classrooms where you have to ... people are judging you constantly, and you didn't even have to think about those... so all of a sudden all those pressures that you find yourself faced with in high school were gone. It was just strictly your learning, because you want to learn here, you're not... I don't know... so I guess that was really nice, that was important for my learning.

This sense of comfort Alexis felt in the classroom allowed for her to focus on her learning and development. This was a feature of the course that Fred also saw as important. He described the peers within the Leadership in Social Justice Classroom as friends and that with friends "everything is a lot more casual…you can actually talk and discuss the stuff you're learning without it seeming sort of like an intellectual debate." In

this community, Fred did not have "a problem saying a slightly insignificant thing, whereas in the middle of a class like putting up your hand and making a side comment about something is a bit embarrassing...." Josh valued the individual relationship he made with members of the classroom community admitting that he is "normally extremely solitary in classes because I don't typically identify with other students. In this class, I can be around people I actually share interests with."

Alternatively, Katherine felt intimidated by the peer group that had formed within the Leadership in Social Justice Program. She experienced pressure from her peers to "act a certain way, dress a certain way" Katherine felt as though "opinions throughout the course were really, really forced on you" and if she was not adhering to the expectations of her peers, she was regarded negatively. Katherine found it difficult to connect with many of the participants, and although these relationships improved towards the end of the semester, initially she felt "intimidated" and excluded from the community. Katherine's feelings of intimidation were not shared by the majority of students who valued the sense of inclusion in the classroom community.

Although Scott would consider himself a "member of the community" of the classroom, he felt that the community did not include all of the 23 students that were enrolled in the Leadership in Social Justice Program. Scott explains that students that "didn't show up regularly" or those that "didn't give a shit" did not contribute to the formation of a community of the classroom, and, thus, were not considered a part of it. In this interpretation, the community of the classroom was exclusive to its members, and only those who invested themselves into the community were considered to be part of it.

The sense of community that was built in the Leadership in Social Justice classroom developed throughout the course of the semester. Initially, many students did not feel the sense of safety necessary to build a classroom community. At the onset of the semester class discussions were described by students as "emotional," "heated," and "blown out of proportion." The at-times hostile environment of the classroom that made community development difficult was improved by a particular unifying classroom experience that several of the students mentioned. After the students visited an organic farming initiative they felt an improved sense of camaraderie and inclusion within the classroom. The owners of the farm offered a venue for students to become involved in physical labour in the fields, cooking and eating a lunch produced from food collected on the farm. They were also invited to ask questions regarding the owners' experience on the farm and heard about their experiences as anticorporate food activists. Alexis cited a resulting shift in the atmosphere of the classroom: "I found that [after that experience] people were more receptive to the responses that each person had to offer. We also called each other out if someone was talking out of place and we got better at group respect." She suggested that measures be taken to engage the class in activities that promote this sense of community as early in the course as possible: "I personally think if we started right off with team building, like a team building exercise, would have done great because that immediately breaks the ice for people, but we didn't." Katherine also suggested that teambuilding activities be introduced within the first weeks to improve group cohesion. The experience of teambuilding activities in the classroom was especially important to Katherine who initially felt excluded from the community of the

classroom. The trip to the organic farming initiative helped to alleviate her feelings of exclusion and intimidation from other student participants.

Sarah, the philosophy teacher, commented on the heightened sense of community in the Leadership in Social Justice classroom. I interviewed Sarah in late May, well into the semester that directly followed the Leadership in Social Justice Program. She was able to reflect on the sense of community built in the classroom by observing the supportive relationships students have maintained after the program's completion:

> I think that the students really built on sense of community and are, are very
> caring of one another, and there are students now who upon completion of the
> course are struggling this semester in their new courses and they're getting a lot of
> care and they're getting a lot of help and they're getting a lot of support from their
> social justice friends and that has been really great to see after the fact.

Certainly, a number of students involved in the Leadership in Social Justice Program experienced great difficulty returning to the self-paced program at Northridge Secondary School after the program's completion. Members of the classroom community that was established and developed through the semester offered support to fellow community members upon their return to the school's regular program. The sense of community that was built in the program has extended beyond the classroom and evolved into important and supportive relationships.

Finding and Following a Student Voice

Critical class discussion presented an opportunity for students and teachers to collectively construct new knowledge in the classroom. Class discussion was largely

student-directed and relied on student contributions to guide conversation to a place students' found relevant to their lives.

Class Discussion

Class discussion was a large part of the Leadership in Social Justice Program, most particularly in the beginning portions of the semester before the pressures of completing the written work associated with the campaigns took over class time towards the end of the semester. Anna cited this process of collaborative learning as positive to her learning experience and accumulation of knowledge:

> I believe that if students are educated and educating others at the same time then they receive a better learning experience and school can be beneficial. School is a great way to share knowledge if it is done the right way. Many students hate school because of the environment. In the program the environment was calm and relaxed and I felt like I obtained more knowledge this way.

Many students identified discussions as positively affecting the depth of learning. For Carrie, "hearing everyone's opinion and knowledge has opened my eyes to information I didn't even know was out there. Each person is extremely intelligent, yet different and it has been amazing being influenced by all of them every day." Similarly, Ryan found that through class-wide discussion he "was considering [the] perspectives of writers and philosophers that I would have otherwise passed over completely." Alexis explained that even if she was not active in expressing her opinions in class discussions she was learning by "just listening because that's the best way really that I learn, just through the discussions they were really helpful, I never would have learned any of that from a textbook ever." Initially intimidated by class discussion, Alexis explained that

you had to get over that at a point... someone is [always] going to know more than you on something, but it doesn't matter because you are probably going to be able to contribute too at some point... in an equally as valuable way.

Some students felt that class discussions often supported a particular viewpoint without accurately and fairly representing the variety of perspectives on the topic under discussion. Carrie "noticed we have a lot of left wing discussions and because we all agree on a lot of it, it is hard to focus on another way of approaching situations." She suggested that in the future, different perspectives should be offered because "it allows for a better perception as well as a more truthful understanding." Katherine felt as though the teacher did not take adequate steps to ensure a range of student voices were represented in discussions and that this may have contributed to certain voices being silenced:

the teacher was just so like "This is how it is" like this opinion is what it is. So either I didn't understand that, so I couldn't talk about it, or I didn't agree but didn't feel comfortable expressing it. So I think if it was more like of an open, hey everyone's opinion.... who has a different opinion? Then we could have all given our 2 cents, but [because] the conversations were so led in a biased direction … it was hard to do.

As a result, Katherine "disliked class-wide discussions" because she felt that "my opinion did not matter." This caused Katherine to feel "less confident expressing my opinion" as the program progressed. Kira also had difficulties overcoming the dominant voices that emerged in discussions. She found that "if an individual disagreed with the majority, they would be ganged up on. This left a lot of students feeling frustrated." Similarly,

Fred expressed that "it seemed like if you weren't already passionate about, or gung ho about social justice in general there wasn't much room to break into the pack." In this case, "the pack" are students who felt comfortable articulating themselves in discussions surrounding issues of social justice, given that students that had voluntarily signed up for the program probably shared an interest in social justice. Amy initially had "some hesitancy to say something that others might disagree with, but I definitely got more confident as the semester wore on." She attributed the frustration felt by other students who continued to feel unable to express their opinions as having "a hard time re-evaluating their opinions in the face of new ideas."

Additionally, students attributed some frustrations with class discussion based on the controversial subject matter of the debate. In some situations students would refrain from voicing their opinions during controversial discussion because. As Andrea noted, "they tended to become blown out of proportion and extremely heated. At times, they became emotional and I didn't care to add to these arguments." Kira liked that the subject matter addressed issues that were absent in her other educational experiences: "As a class we did deal with some fairly controversial subjects, and at times it was hard to face, but this is reality. Nothing was sugar coated and I really liked that."

John initiated a conversation about discussions that alleviated some of the tensions that existed in the earliest of debates. Alexis describes this discussion about discussion as a "debate in itself." It was through this conversation about how to handle controversial topics that guidelines were established. These guidelines included not being able, as Alexis put it, "to just interject into what someone says," agreeing on "a set of words that [we] perhaps wouldn't say in our discussion" and not being "allowed to put

anyone down." Andrea refers to a conversation about discussions as well which stressed that the class needed to "take other people's opinions seriously" and "to accept everyone's thoughts and opinions." The discussion also attempted to identify that "questioning" another student's perspective should not be interpreted as "personally bashing" but rather, "exploring."

John's perception of class discussion reminded him of the collaborative approach to learning that he experienced in his "graduate school discussion groups where there would be someone presenting a paper, and … they would have a certain level of expertise, but other people would jump in." John also recognized that in class discussions he may have "spoken way too much and filled that space too much." He did not feel, however, that this might have been inappropriate and suggested that if he "was a student in the class I would have been a loud mouth as well" because it is his "personality." In the classroom, he described situations where he had to be a "referee between kids" and in some instances a "translator" when students were unsure of certain concepts.

Student-Directed Learning

John's initial vision for the program involved the implementation of student-directed learning. Student-directed learning grants students the flexibility to pursue educational experiences that adhere to their interests and this approach positions John, as the teacher, as a facilitator of these educational experiences. This flexibility to direct one's own learning is another exciting aspect of the program that was valued by many students. Anna values this aspect above all others: "What I value most about this

program is the ability to learn what I want to learn. We have the flexibility to focus on things that are more important to us and gear assignments to better suit our strengths." This flexibility allowed for students to find relevance between their experiences with the program and their own lives. Alexis explained that within the Leadership in Social Justice Program, students were able to direct their own learning which promoted a connection to the material. In other courses, she argued, the material "stays on the surface and you can't connect to it in any way" whereas with the Leadership in Social Justice Program you can "dive into" the material and, thus, become "personally attached to it." In this context, Alexis engaged in a critical reflection of her own experience in relation to the subject matter that emerged in class. Fred described his experience with student-directed learning as, "less regurgitation of some influential opinion and more your own reflection or introspection."

Alexis explained that through her experience with a program that she found to be more relevant to her own life than her previous educational experiences she "learned more about myself and about life and about everyone else than I did about the content of our course." She found the Leadership in Social Justice Program to be, "much more enriching, it was so much more valuable to me than the traditional education system has been for the last 12, 13 years." She questioned

> why this isn't the normal system, considering education is aimed for the betterment ... for the development of the individual, but it doesn't focus on the individual it just says okay lets conform... everyone needs to know this and that seems to be it.

Alexis identified the role of the teacher in this form of "untraditional education" as being a motivator to explore different learning experiences:

> Well the traditional role of the teacher was what they say ... they say what you're supposed to do or what you're supposed to learn and you're not allowed to question it. If you have questions and you want to explore different areas, then that is not exactly encouraged because that could take too much away from your assignment…. Whereas social justice… yes... please go that way... they encourage you to go the other directions.

Alexis also identified a difference in the sources of information used throughout the Leadership in Social Justice Program. Instead of drawing almost exclusively on textbooks,

> people drew from [a variety of] books and [from] each other and I know [that] personally, when writing an essay I could think back to what my classmates said and that was the direction I got, that was proof that I used.

A flexible set of guidelines allowed for students to direct their own learning and learn from each other. As Scott pointed out, "you could have two people that did the same in the course but walk away completely different because they looked to the material from so many different perspectives."

Issues of Power and Authority

Student feedback of John's effectiveness as a teacher and as the leader of the Leadership in Social Justice Program was mixed. Many students expressed concern over John's approach to class discussions, which was a particularly prominent learning strategy of the program. Additionally, at times students felt that their actions were stifled

by the educational institution from which they were advocating. These issues of power and authority are discussed below.

The Role of the Teacher

The previous section, Finding and Following a Student Voice, described student involvement in class discussion that resulted in both positive and negative feelings towards this learning strategy. Some students felt empowered by the opportunity to contribute to the knowledge base of the class by offering their own expertise and opinions, and by the opportunity to learn from the expertise and opinions of their peers. However, roughly an equal number of students felt that their voices were not represented in class discussion because they felt intimidated and/or silenced by the prominent opinion of their peers and/or the authority of the teacher in a class discussion. Students offered insight into the role of the lead teacher in the context of the Leadership in Social Justice Program and how they felt empowered or stifled by John's efforts.

Kira believed that teachers are entitled to their own opinions but clarified that she does not "think a teacher should take sides in a debate. It's not a matter of who is right or wrong on these issues." Similarly, Justin felt that John "ruined the even-sidedness of the discussion, since…well…he's an authority figure." For James, John needed to be a "moderator" and when John "barged in and gave his input, he just made us feel dumb. He won arguments almost every time because he had authority, and we didn't want to piss him off." For James, there was a distinct hierarchy of voices in class discussion, whereby John's voice was regarded with higher authority and this power was used destructively to silence students.

Amy "enjoy[ed] hearing what John had to say" and felt that "the course would suffer immensely if the teachers had some sort of gag rule." However, she also admitted that "certainly he could have been more considerate of personal feelings." Similarly, Andrea felt as though the teacher "should be able to express his views completely." She described John as "more of an equal than an authority figure and, therefore, he deserves equal rights and say." Andrea explained that the teacher's opinion often "made a little bit more sense" because they "really knew what they were talking about," while in the same breath claimed that "everyone's opinion was valued equally as we learned from discussions." She claimed that John's views "intrigued students and spurred discussion further." Andrea's perception of the hierarchy of voices in class discussions is somewhat contradictory by claiming that John's opinion is both equal to her own and her classmates, but should also be regarded as the most accurate.

Some students took issue with John's attitude. Josh expressed that "certainly the teacher should make his views known, however, maybe he shouldn't be so damned arrogant while doing it." Anna felt as though the "problem lies in the severity of his arguments – as in he makes it seem like he's right and everyone else is completely wrong." She suggested that "there needs to be a balance" and that John can facilitate the discussion and "also express their (sic) opinion in a respectful manner." Katherine felt as though John should have "made it more clear to the class that everyone's opinion mattered and could be discussed." Instead, discussion was reserved for students that were "up to par with his intelligence" and "little conversational effort was made with those students who were not." Alexis identified many discussions as "very biased" and

pointed out that John "gave a lot of direction." She observed that if students had opinions that "went against his, then they were wrong."

John said in his interview that he struggled between expressing his opinions passionately and maintaining a culture of respect when engaging in classwide discussions. John believes it is "naïve" to think that kids do not interpret "body language" or "the way you weigh things" and associate with a certain set of values. He believes it is "more honest to say, "I'm angry about this!" In a situation where John voices his opinion, he claims to also recognize "the other side" but then also explains why he does not believe the other side is a good argument. Through this discussion of his passion of expressing his activism in his teaching, John recognized the tension that exists between voicing his opinion and allowing the students to form their own.

Setting Boundaries for Social Justice

Students felt frustrated by the restrictions set in place by the educational institution from which they were attempting to advocate for social change. Shannon expressed the difficulty of running a social campaign "under the binds of the school board." She felt that students were "limited in our actions. I always feel like I'm walking on eggshells – there is a fine line between what we can and can't do." Julie identified one of those frustrations as the necessity of getting approval from the principal to "create change." The principal, Rob, addresses this concern by asking, "Can we teach social justice while staying within rules of a building, societal rules, societal laws?... What are we teaching if we are teaching students to intentionally break laws or break rules." Rob identified these questions as "big ones" for him as the administrator of the building. The discussion surrounding this identified tension stems from a specific

instance of the intervention of one of the campaign groups within Northridge Secondary School.

The "cafeteria" campaign group chose to critique the for-profit school cafeteria that offered what they viewed as (contrary to the principal's opinion) a very limited selection of healthy foods for student consumption. They hypothesized that students would purchase healthy foods if they were made available and sold at a reasonable price. On one occasion, the group cooked lasagna at home and brought it to school and sold it outside of the cafeteria doors. Group members felt exhilarated because they "broke the rules, fought back, and came one step closer to making a difference." This activity was not received well by the cafeteria manager or the workers, which as Rob, the principal, explained, created a misplaced "us against them" dichotomy between the students and the cafeteria staff when "what they wanted [was] to battle Chartwells," the company that operated the cafeteria. In effect, the students "poisoned the relationship with the women who work in the school [and] who take great pride in [their work]." As Rob explains, the major issue with the activity was "that they didn't communicate [their intentions] with those women who feel that they are really a part of this school." Furthermore, he pointed out that they used, without permission, cafeteria supplies, plates, knives, forks, etc. to serve their lasagna. The students missed these steps and Rob allocates some of the responsibility for that to the "role of the classroom teacher to stop those things from happening ahead of time" or, he wondered, "do kids need to live through those things, to learn from those experiences to truly be engaged in the social justice?" Rob acknowledged the potential for conflict within the school as an educational experience.

The Impact of the Leadership in Social Justice Program

The Leadership in Social Justice Program impacted the participating students and teachers in a variety of ways. The impact of the program for each student was as unique as were the students themselves; however, an overarching theme emerged that identified a major impact of the Leadership in Social Justice Program as a heightened sense of awareness. Students described a change in their awareness of themselves and a newfound awareness of how they view their place in the world. As a result of the program, students also cited that they felt more aware of the educational institution and possibilities for education. The perspectives of both teachers and the school's administrator are reported in a separate section below that also highlights students' heightened sense of awareness as a result of their involvement in the program, in addition to the impact the program had on the educators themselves.

Developing Self-Awareness

Participants cited an increased sense of self-awareness including the development of personal value systems, as an exciting and impactful element of the program. Alexis felt that the class made her realize that "you're working to develop yourself." In this sense, "you're not developing your mind to [get] good marks, you're developing your mind so that when you're in the outside world you're just more... conscious, you can see things that are happening around you, and that was important." Alexis credited the program with giving her "direction" for her career and life and a better sense of the people around her: "it taught me a lot about people and the different types of people ... and what I need in other people." Alexis also identified that the experience in the Leadership in Social Justice Program initiated a change in her value system stating that,

"now my values are in my person, they're not just something I think about, it's my day to day life."

Scott expressed the relevance of the material impacting participants in a variety of unique ways. He felt that the program, "shapes you; it molds you into a new person." Scott accredits this to the relevance of material and to the fact that it does not have "set, specific guidelines." He felt that "you didn't take information [rather] you took ideas away, things turned from arguments to discussions. The learning was a lot more mature I guess you could say." While initially feeling "intimidated" by the culture of the classroom, particularly the class discussion, Katherine ultimately identified her strengths and ways of contributing to the program and the surrounding community. She overcame early self-doubts and came to realize that

> I can keep up with conversation, like [at first] I had no clue what consumerism
>
> and this and that... like I couldn't keep up, but you realize what your strengths and
>
> weaknesses are... at first I was really down on myself like why can't I keep up a
>
> conversation about the war, why can't I talk about this and that. But then I kind
>
> of put it in perspective... but I can go and approach people on the street or go and
>
> sit and have lunch with those homeless people and carry on a conversation.

However, Katherine did not feel that the program impacted her to the same extent that it had "changed" her fellow classmates:

> I wouldn't say like it changed [me]... like a lot of people are like 'it changed me'
>
> it didn't [change] me in what I want to know and research, it just made me more
>
> aware and I think that's really important for everyone.

Not surprisingly, most of the students reported that the program represented a change; even Katherine, the most reluctant to admit being changed, recognized that it made her "more aware."

Finding a Place in the World

The Leadership in Social Justice Program exposed students to a variety of social justice issues and taught them the conceptual and organizational skills to conduct a campaign to address social injustices in a practical way. Ongoing class discussion, which formed an integral part of the program, focused on social justice issues and drew largely on student experiences and sought to develop informed opinions. This essential component of the program helped to change students' awareness of themselves in relation to the world around them. Sam stated that the program "changes how you view your place in the world." Other participants also expressed an awareness of the impact that the program had on their community and the globe, and accredit this to their involvement in the program:

- Ellen felt that she has, "the motivation to stay involved. This course is only the start, and it has given me the tools I need to continue."

- Amy argued that "my experiences here have absolutely reinforced the sense of social responsibility I had been toying with before - in large part, that participation and personal investment in both my local and global community is not only desirable, but necessary in order to make those communities better."

- Stacey stated: "This class has given me the knowledge, opportunity and resources to create change."

- Alexis recognized, as a result of this learning experience, "I now view my role in society as one where I can promote positive change through my day to day actions. I now am comfortable offering political views to a discussion and feel confident advocating for the issues that I wish to [engage with]."

- Sam emphatically stated that: "This course has made how I view my role in society change in a very large way. It has made me feel as if there is always a way to fight against injustices, no matter how small or how large they are, there is always a way."

- Involvement in the program has caused Hannah to think deeply about how her "role in the community matters."

- Scott concluded that "the main idea is that social justice education shouldn't be separate from the rest of the planet. It should be another piece of the puzzle that goes into your life. Social Justice did that, now again education has become a chore, it's just become another thing that I have to do. "

- Kira noted that "Before this program I knew there were issues I cared about and wanted to change. I just didn't know how to go about doing it. This course gave me the opportunity to do something about these problems. The fact that I saw my action making a change in my school was a great experience. It has taught me that I can make a difference within my community and this is something that I will carry on for the rest of my life."

- Through her involvement with the Homelessness One campaign, Katherine noted that she had built "relationships with people throughout our community and like by the end it was emotionally touching because I was like 'Wow' this course did

open up our eyes and allowed us to build these relationships and that was really super cool."

While one cannot predict the longevity of the described impact of each students' experiences, collected data seems to suggest that few academic experiences elicit such a strong attachment from the participants.

Understanding a New Educational Paradigm

Participants expressed, through both the written questionnaires and qualitative interviews, frustration with the traditional education they were exposed to before their involvement with the Leadership in Social Justice Program, identified by many students as a form of untraditional education. The program helped students to "open their eyes" to the possibilities of education, and the possibilities for themselves as learners. Through written questionnaires and interviews, participants offered unique perspectives on how the program changed their view of education and of themselves as learners:

- Stacey wrote that, "this program has proven to me that teachers and educators have the ability to TEACH their students something worthwhile, they just don't."

- Amy felt "alienated" by the "method of delivery" of traditional education, "This program has helped to revive my faith in formal education. I feel like I am being treated with respect as an individual whose thoughts matter for their own worth, not just for how they can be coaxed into a prescribed model."

- Through this course, Katherine, "learned that school does not simply have to be reading textbooks and answering questions. I find that I'm learning more than I have learned in all of high school through class discussions and others' views and opinions."

- James suggested that "students are smarter than they look. Give them something important to think about and learn, and I'm sure they'll be on board. Not all - not even most. But more than you think."

- Sam valued "the challenge this course presented. I was so used to just going through school as if it were nothing but this course provided real challenge, and in the end, gave me real change. I actually grew personally as well as academically."

- Andrea contrasted the Leadership in Social Justice Program with having "equations or essay genres being drilled in my head one day and forgotten and never applied to life the next. I will honestly walk away from this course with a new mindset, skills, and confidence."

- Scott felt that his experience with the Leadership in Social Justice Program was "100% more meaningful" than any previous educational experience.

- Alexis wrote that, "The course work is relevant to much deeper concepts within society and the world around us, which can't be said for the courses that are mandatory. Why isn't relevant information mandatory?"

- Ellen noted that, "This program offered me a connection with my learning. For several years I had been differentiating between what I learned in school and what I learned of life. This class found a way to bring the environment and quality of information together so it could be for the first time be meaningful. "

- Richard, too, was positive about the experience and stated that "it has the potential to change one's attitude about school," although he lamented that "one

semester in my last year of my secondary academic career [wouldn't] compensate for everything that has become ingrained" up to that point.

It is clear that in many cases the program did not just have the potential to change one's attitude of traditional schooling, it was successful in highlighting the possibility for more meaningful education.

The Impact: John, Sarah, and Rob's Perspectives

It is not surprising given the complex nature of the program, that special relationships of varying magnitude were developed between the students, teachers, and the administrator. Sarah, the philosophy teacher who, despite the fact that she only taught the students the one course, developed relationships with the students that extended beyond the semester during which she taught them. These relationships were unusually deep in comparison to her relationships with classes she had previously taught. She felt that this connection was made because the group became "so cohesive as a unit" and she felt "very close to those students." She cited the example of a particular student from the program whom she continued to teach the following semester. This student was experiencing some difficulties at home and Sarah felt that she has developed a special rapport and trust with this student that is unlike a relationship she has experienced with a student to date. Sarah not only saw growth in individual students, but saw meaningful relationships grow within the community of the Leadership in Social Justice classroom.

Rob, the principal, although he said it was a "motherhood statement," said that the Leadership in Social Justice Program "empowered" the students. He cited a student presentation to the compensatory education committee of the Board of Education as an example that highlighted this student empowerment. During this presentation, students

articulated their concerns to "a different population within the board … and were able to raise some awareness of what they were doing as students who were concerned about a cause." Rob's observation of this presentation incited a feeling of "we've got to keep doing this." Another aspect of the program that evoked this feeling was the development of students' ability to "engage in healthy debate" and understand that "it's okay to have differing opinions, that it is okay as an intellectual to have that conversation and still walk out not angry with each other." From Rob's perspective, the student experience in the Leadership in Social Justice Program helped to develop an awareness and tolerance of multiple and competing perspectives.

John, the program's core teacher, described that many students articulated to him that they no longer want to spend their time "reading crap and watching bad movies." John exposed them to many documentaries, something he did consistently each week. Now, he said, students "go to different people's houses to watch documentaries" and organize their own discussions about what is presented to them, much like they had done within the classroom. John has received similar feedback surrounding a change in the literature students have chosen to read, which he described as "quite a big, a big step for a lot of them." He also described the impact that the Leadership in Social Justice Program had on his personal and professional development. John learned about learning, teaching, philosophy, history, sociology, and most notably, about himself.

John was troubled by the realization that some of the students may have taken advantage of the freedom to direct their learning. Prompted by a student's post on the class blog that admitted "we took advantage of this course…[Hammer] said we could choose what we wanted to do and we slacked off and took advantage of it." This

happening was really "agonizing" for John because the possibility of such a situation had never occurred to him,

> I thought, let them do whatever they want, of course they're going to just, going to do whatever, because you have that kid in your head that is just looking for these opportunities and to sit there and watch them, just distractions and not taking on hard questions and wasting their time.

The data collected from the Leadership in Social Justice Program identify that student experience was diverse. Constructive feedback was elicited from student participants who felt strongly that aspects of the program could and should be addressed. However, despite a small minority of students that did not feel positively influenced by the program, the majority of students identified several aspects of the program that were positive. The impact of the program is reflected in student awareness in the areas of (a) self-awareness, (b) changing students' perceptions of how they relate to the world around them, and (c) the development of an understanding of a new educational paradigm. In the final chapter I will analyze and interpret my findings.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND IMPLICATIONS

This final chapter begins with a summary of the exploration of the Leadership in Social Justice Program, followed by a discussion of the findings through the following headings: Pedagogical Processes, Issues of Power and Authority, Experiencing Social Justice, A Sense of Community, and The Challenge of Change. The chapter ends with an exploration of implications for the study, followed by the study's hopeful conclusion.

Summary

The first four chapters of this thesis (a) introduced the study, (b) reviewed the related literature, (c) presented the methodology that was employed, and (d) reported the results of the study. In Chapter Two, the literature review, I explored the historical and theoretical foundations of social justice and critical pedagogy and examined the relationship between the two. I discovered that the creation of a more socially just society has been a longstanding goal of educators as exemplified by Dewey (1916/1966), and, subsequently, by Freire (1970/1993), Giroux (1988), Apple (1982/1995), and hooks (1994) among others. This continues to be the goal of educators today who have sought to implement the ideas developed by these pedagogues. The importance of the practice of critical pedagogy was established in the literature review through an exploration of the roles of teachers and students, the community of the classroom, pedagogical processes, and curricular content. The literature review concluded with an exploration of the pursuit of social justice through critical pedagogy in a Canadian context. In Chapter Three, I outlined the methodology and research design of the study, which draws methodological inspiration from qualitative and, specifically, grounded theory frameworks. Data were collected through two questionnaires and a series of qualitative interviews. Data analysis

focused on emergent themes from the data collected to identify the underlying elements of the program that elicited both positive and negative responses from student participants.

The following research questions guided this exploration:

- In what ways did the Leadership in Social Justice Program impact students?

- What aspects of the program can be identified as strengths?

- What aspects of the program can be identified as weaknesses?

- How can an exploration of this program be utilized in future educational theory and practice?

In Chapter Four, I provided an overview of the summary of the findings of the study by outlining the impact of the Leadership in Social Justice Program for students and identified noteworthy aspects of the program. It is the intention of this study to promote the sharing of educators' experiences teaching for social justice through critical pedagogy in order to provide support and direction to educators that hope to enact a positive and critical change in their schools and classrooms.

Discussion

The first iteration of the Leadership in Social Justice Program impacted participating students and teachers in many unique ways. The presentation of results in Chapter Four identified three major areas of awareness which described ways in which student participants were impacted most profoundly. These areas were (a) developing self-awareness, (b) understanding a new educational paradigm, and (c) finding a place in the world. The student participants articulated their own personal growth in these areas as a result of the program, and explained the lasting impact of the Leadership in Social

Justice Program on their lives. The majority of students identified several, if not all, thematic aspects of the program that were positive while a minority did not experience such positive results. While I am unable to predict whether the program will have a long-term impact on the students – a longitudinal study would be required to determine that – the data collected indicate that students had a significant personal experience. In many cases, it is clear that the program was successful in highlighting the possibility for more meaningful education than that provided by more traditional educational experiences. The following discussion highlights areas of the program that impacted participants' development of awareness most profoundly.

Pedagogical Processes

Many participants experienced a shift in their value system. They assessed and extended their own values; for example, some students changed how they viewed themselves, their relationships, and began to recognize their individualized educational needs, styles, and ways of learning. Freire (1970/1993) found that by engaging in critical pedagogy, students developed an awareness of themselves and identified ways in which they could contribute their strengths to the classroom, while pursuing subject matter relevant to their lives. John's vision of the program included granting students the flexibility to direct their own learning and pursue their desired subject matter. In student-directed learning, the teacher encourages self-direction, which is in stark contrast to the strict parameters of the learning student participants identified in their previous educational experiences. Their previous educational experiences can be likened to Freire's (1970/1993) description of banking education. John's vision of the Leadership in Social Justice Program encouraged students to question existing knowledge and to find

relevance between their learning experiences and their own lives. This self-directed

learning is central to the ideals of Freirean (Freire, 1970/1993) critical pedagogy, most

particularly the use of generative themes, a process by which students produce their own

knowledge, and problem posing education.

Despite an initial discomfort with student-directed learning felt by the majority of

students, student participants cited self-directed learning as a positive aspect of the

program that promoted reflection and introspection. Reflection and introspection allowed

students to foster both a deeper understanding of the material and of themselves. In the

context of the Leadership in Social Justice Program, student participants critically

examined their own lives through the reflection and introspection that was initiated

through class discussion and the emergence of generative themes. hooks (1994) suggests

that students rightfully expect that teachers will not offer them information without

addressing the connection between what they are learning and their own life experiences.

John's encouragement of self-directed learning fostered a connection between what

students were learning and their own life experiences; however, the manner in which

John presented information was considered to be problematic by some student

participants.

Collaborative discussion was a prominent pedagogical practice in the Leadership

in Social Justice Program and many students felt class discussion positively affected the

depth of their learning. Students appreciated the opportunity to learn from the expertise

of their peers and contribute in the same way; however, student opinion varied with

respect to the role of the teacher in class discussions. A significant number of the

students felt that John "ruined the even-sidedness of discussion" by passionately

presenting his personal opinions on topics of debate. John, these students felt, used his authority to win arguments and silence voices that held opposing viewpoints which made students, like James, "feel dumb." Students felt that the teacher did not take adequate steps to ensure a range of student voices were represented in discussions and that this contributed to certain voices being silenced. John's authority as a teacher, his well-developed communication skills, and his knowledge of, and clear opinions about, the issues under discussion created a hierarchy of voices in the discussion, whereby John's voice carried the most weight.

While the majority of students felt that John misused his authority in classroom discussions, not everyone agreed. Some students enjoyed hearing John's opinion and felt the course would have suffered if teachers were limited by a "gag rule" and that his voice spurred discussion further and helped to clarify the issues that were presented. One student described John as equal rather than an authority figure, claiming that all voices in the discussions held equal weight. Nonetheless, the majority of student participants were in agreement: John imposed his views on the debate in a way that they found unacceptable. The students' previous teachers may not have challenged them in the way that John did and they felt uncomfortable with the new approach. Perhaps they did not understand the negotiation that is necessary in critical pedagogical practice, an ongoing process that is complex and requires both time and effort from students. Students may not have been ready to accept that by relinquishing some of the power held by the teacher, they would have to take more responsibility for their own learning. It appears that students' previous understanding of the traditional roles of the teacher and the student in teacher-centred classrooms is difficult to overcome. A period of transition may

be required to allow students time to fully grasp the new paradigm or the process must be explained more clearly.

In a classroom setting, teachers have more power than students and, as evidenced from participant feedback, this imbalance of power was not addressed, or it was presented in a manner that fostered a clear understanding of the issue among students. Despite one student's assertion that all voices carried equal weight in the classroom, this was not the case, and John failed to recognize this imbalance over the course of the semester and to address it explicitly. According to hooks (2010), it is the teacher's responsibility to acknowledge his authority in the classroom by recognizing that his voice carries more weight than student voices. Educational practice is directive but this directivity should not interfere with the "creative, formulative, investigative capacity of the educand" (Freire, 1992/1996, p. 79). According to Freire (1992/1996), an interference with the educand transforms "directivity" into "manipulation" and "authoritarianism." In my follow-up conversation with John, he admitted he struggled between voicing his opinions and allowing students to develop their own. John believes students will decipher his feelings about a subject even if he made efforts to remain neutral, and that he should express his opinions honestly and without restraint. Freire (1992/1996) believes an educator can present his/her "reading of the world" but it should not be imposed on students, but rather it can be presented to emphasize "that there are other 'readings of the world' different from the teachers' which are even antagonistic to it" (p. 112). John made an effort to communicate his "readings of the world" through class discussion, but did not make enough effort to emphasize other "readings of the world." By utilizing the authority he held in the classroom to highlight his "readings of

the world," it was imposed on students when it should have been suggested as one interpretation. Macedo (1994) notes that it is the responsibility of the teacher to create a classroom community that allows for silenced voices to be heard, but it is not possible for educators to give voices to their students, rather they must discover their own. It was John's responsibility to make "it more clear to the class that everyone's opinion mattered and could be discussed" and by negating this responsibility the success of the program was hindered.

However, it is also important to recognize that a successful program that utilizes critical pedagogy effectively is not necessarily void of conflict. In fact, the nature of critical pedagogy necessitates some discomfort in order to facilitate individual growth. This is in accordance with Shirley Steinberg's (2007) warning for critical educators: "Sit down, open the pages, and do not expect to be relaxed – do plan to be uncomfortable: it is with that uncomfortability that we will teach" (p. x). When students and teachers embrace new educational approaches, there will be some degree of pain in giving up old ways of thinking and knowing. As hooks (1994) learned from her teaching experience, when teachers challenge students they may need to give up the need for an immediate affirmation of their teaching practices. Shifting paradigms and sharing knowledge in new ways is challenging for students and it may take time for students to recognize that challenge as positive. Thus, while one can suggest possible improvements to critical pedagogical practice, these suggestions should not imply that all conflict should be eliminated. A level of conflict should be anticipated, and perhaps even welcomed to promote the development of students' awareness of themselves, their roles as active citizens, and a new educational paradigm.

Nonetheless, students not only expressed concerns about John's pedagogy and the extent to which he imposed his particular views, students expressed issue with his attitude and the manner in which he communicated these views. Students had issue with John's "arrogance" and the "severity of his arguments" that communicated to students that he was right and they were wrong if they did not share in his opinion. Students suggested that John be more considerate of personal feelings and that more effort could have been made to maintain a culture of respect in the classroom. hooks (2010) argues that teachers can "create a climate for optimal learning if we understand the level of emotional awareness and emotional intelligence in the classroom" (p.19). Participant response suggested that in class discussion, John disregarded the emotional climate of the classroom. Had he taken more time to assess what his students brought to the program and to consider his relationship to his students, John may have been able to predict more accurately student response to his communicative style, and changed his approach accordingly.

Issues of Power and Authority

Initially, some students felt that they lacked a feeling of safety in the classroom, most particularly class discussions when arguments would escalate to be emotional and heated. At the onset of the semester, class discussions were described by students as "emotional," "heated," and "blown out of proportion." There is no doubt that these discussions were educational, and that many discussions that center on controversial subject matter can become argumentative, despite being well-organized. However, when discussions were identified as becoming out of control, there was a sense that more harm than good was being done. In circumstances such as this, the teacher plays a vital role to

ensure that discussions weigh on the side of good. John cited that both his personality and his investment in the course made it difficult for him to step outside the discussion when it was necessary, suggesting that he was at times unable to direct his actions towards creating positive experiences for the class. hooks (2003) welcomes a passionate dialogical exchange in contrast to the pressure to maintain an atmosphere void of conflict which actually works to silence discussion. John did not shy away from passionate discussions and heated subject matter, but in many cases students did not foster the sense of safety necessary to build a classroom community.

John describes situations in the classroom where he had to be a "referee" and a "translator" for the students by explaining complex concepts in ways students could understand. This description of the role of the teacher is a more positive example of ways in which the teacher can present and intervene in information acquisition without intimidation. However, John's difficulty was in moderating his input during the discussion of controversial topics. Ross (2010) describes ways in which educators can successfully engage with controversial topics through class discussion. He describes that the role of the teacher is to facilitate argument, protect diverse viewpoints, challenge the pupils' viewpoints (which may include pointing out inconsistencies in the views expressed), and suggest how and what further information could be sought out. The teacher needs to engage in the discussion by putting forward his/her views; however, it is necessary to make clear that this is only a view and need not be the student's views. The teacher's views should be presented in a way that "allows the class to respond, to rebut and to challenge them" (Ross, 2010, p. 157). As evidenced by student feedback, John did not successfully communicate that his viewpoint was only one perspective, nor did he

advocate for diverse viewpoints if they were in opposition to his own, which created an imbalance of authority in controversial class discussion. Unfortunately, John's authority in class discussion may have worked to reiterate traditional expectations of power and authority in the classroom whereby the teacher disseminates information to the student, rather than to challenge power relations.

Sarah suggested that in order to alleviate the tensions that arose from heated class discussion, students should be better taught how to form and articulate their opinion. In her opinion, students were not adequately equipped to present, argue, defend, and articulate their position. In the classroom, teachers have a great deal of authority even on topics they are not all that informed about because that is the model with which students are familiar. Thus, it is important to teach students the tools they require to be more articulate, so they feel more confident expressing their opinions in the presence of the teacher's authority. Ross (2010) agrees that educators should offer a model of how to argue a case, which includes (a) showing students how to avoid pejorative and offensive language, (b) demonstrating how to make a series of points, and (c) showing them how to construct a sequenced argument. If the class is divided, it is the role of the teacher to encourage each issue to be explored from a multiplicity of views thereby eliminating a for and against dichotomy.

John reasons that in future iterations of the program there should be more of a balance between the two teachers involved in the program. John believes that an "equal partner in the program" would alleviate some of the intimidation felt by students in the program. John posited that because it was "my program and she [Sarah, the other teacher who taught the Philosophy credit to the Leadership in Social Justice students] did the

Philosophy part" students were hesitant to offer critical feedback to John because they "didn't want to hurt my feelings." Students did offer critical feedback through the anonymity of student questionnaires and through qualitative interviews regarding John. The critical feedback that was offered did not suggest issues with the unequal division of the program between two teachers, but rather John's intrusion into class discussion. John might have felt that splitting the program between two teachers equally would divert attention from him as the sole authority of the program. This might be true if the two teachers were to co-teach whereby they could serve as models of discussion, demonstrate different teaching styles, and address the needs of students in diverse ways. However, John does not see future iterations of the program as being co-taught, but as each teaching in separate classrooms. I am not confident that an equal division of the program between Sarah and John would do much to alleviate this issue because in separate classrooms John's methodology would continue to go unchallenged by a comparable voice of authority.

Experiencing Social Justice

As evidenced by student feedback, the Leadership in Social Justice Program was successful in heightening students' awareness of themselves as local and global citizens, and created conditions for students to act on their awareness to create positive social change, which, I propose, is consistent with Dower's (2008) observations. Dower suggests that education for social change need not measure success based on its ability to impassion a majority of engaged activists. The goal of education for social change is that students become aware of themselves as local and global citizens as a result of the educational experience and students will decide for themselves if they wish to move

beyond this awareness to become active in campaigning, leadership, and advocacy. Students' experiences with issues of social justice through their campaign efforts was diverse and complicated by the contradiction that exists between critical pedagogical practice that involves an agenda for radical social change, and teaching this agenda in an established educational institution. This contradiction of advocating for change within an established educational institution was a prominent tension that existed for students involved in the Leadership in Social Justice Program.

Rob, the principal, identified his "biggest challenge" was to determine the line that separates social justice "which has an aura of breaking rules" from interfering with the "public educational institution" which houses these social justice advocates. The reader is reminded of such incidents as the cafeteria group's action that upset the cafeteria staff. To alleviate these tensions in future programs, Rob hopes that John will better prepare students to present their ideas to Rob for approval. The implementation of an "event planning checklist" was offered as a possible solution to this problem, to ensure that students have taken into consideration the impact of their activities before proceeding with their events. The checklist would describe the necessary steps to plan an event before an administrator approved it and would serve as an important planning and organizational tool for students to utilize and to potentially develop themselves as effective activists. This checklist would satisfy an area of tension Rob described as frustration that resulted because of a lack of communication and a lack of what was perceived as clear organization. This feedback was offered near the end of the Leadership in Social Justice Program and after a number of problems that were of concern to the principal occurred. In the future, Rob hopes that students learn "that there

are frameworks and structures that we do operate in and some of those are nonnegotiables if you are not going to break the laws and break the rules." However, careful attention will need to be paid to the checklist to ensure that the checklist remains a simple planning tool and not an instrument of administrative control. Rob hopes that this organizational tool will be implemented in subsequent programs. Rob's continued support for the program, despite the frustrations that accompanied it, was crucial to its survival. Administrative support is integral to the support of any critical educational endeavor and the Leadership in Social Justice Program is no exception.

Campaigns that chose to explore social change "out there" did not encounter a problem with the constraints of the educational institutions, but groups such as the cafeteria group were confronted with it, and felt it was detrimental to their campaign experience. According to Sarah, in the initial conception of the program, the community aspects of the campaign would require outreach outside of the school. This sentiment was also cited through student questionnaires and interviews. After a campaign experience that initiated the development of relationship with the homeless community, students suggested that all the campaigns should be community based. They had come to realize that there is distinction between learning about social justice and actually experiencing it and that to lose that experience would be detrimental to the students' understanding of what it means to cause social change. Many students cited that their involvement in the program led them to the realization that active participation in local and global communities is necessary to make those communities better; however, the experience of the Homelessness One campaign was different and perhaps more profound than the majority of groups that resolved to focus their campaigns within the school. The

Homelessness One group also avoided the frustrations experienced by groups that felt confined by the restrictions set in place at the school by extending their focus beyond the walls of Northridge Secondary School. Both teachers revealed in their interviews that a community aspect of the campaign should take place outside of the school in future iterations of the program, which, I believe, would foster a stronger connection between students and their local communities.

Students not only encountered a tension between their efforts as budding social activists and compliance with the rules and regulations of the educational institution, but also through what they regarded as a lack of traditional assessment strategies used throughout the program. The forms of assessment utilized in traditional paradigms of education (e.g., tests, quizzes, written assignments, etc.) reinforce Freire's (1970/1993) banking system of education whereby the teacher is the central source of knowledge and students are passive recipients. If John had satisfied the concerns of students by evaluating their progress through traditional forms of assessment, students' individual experiences and understanding of the material would have been devalued and an authoritative student-teacher relationship would have been reinforced. However, alternative assessment practices that rely heavily on students' interpretation of their own growth are undermined by the reality of the current Ontario secondary school system that relies on teacher evaluation to assign grades, and the use of standardized testing in an effort to maintain consistency across the province. Ultimately, John assigned grades based on an evaluation of student participation in class discussion, their contributions to their respective campaigns, and through reflective written assignments.

The reality facing critical educators is that it is difficult to fit critical and authentic learning opportunities into the restraints of educational institutions; however, hooks (2003) challenges educators to "find and enter the open spaces in closed systems" because without this effort "we doom ourselves by reinforcing the belief that these educational systems cannot be changed" (p. 74). Educators and administrators must become active agents in shaping curriculum, policy, and practice to best serve the changing needs of learners and to prevent the maintenance of a status quo that could hinder potential for student development.

A Sense of Community

The students of the Leadership in Social Justice Program recognized social interaction, or a "sense of community" that they had eventually established as the most valued aspect of the Leadership in Social Justice Program. A sense of community was, in part, achieved through the organization of the program as a four-credit package that promoted constant interaction between students. Student participants had varying opinion on how community developed within the classroom. The structure of the program allowed students the "time, space and freedom" to build a community. The organization of four credits in a noncompartmentalized approach can be aligned with Freirean (Freire, 1970/1993) ideals that encourage interdisciplinary and authentic educational experiences that are relevant to the lives of students. Other students credited a well-developed sense of community to shared interests among the student participants that had enrolled in the program. Students' voluntary enrollment in the Leadership in Social Justice Program would suggest they shared a common interest in pursuing a new educational paradigm, and a shared interest of issues of social justice. The creation of a

space where students of similar interests were awarded the opportunity to learn together across a variety of subject areas were necessary preconditions for students to develop the heightened sense of community they experienced.

For Dewey (1916/1966), social interaction is a necessary part of a democratic learning experience. Students valued the relationships that were fostered within the community of the classroom, while the majority of students expressed that the sense of community made many students feel "comfortable" and "relaxed" which allowed students to focus on their learning without being hindered by the stresses they had felt in other classrooms. John, the teacher, built on a Freirean (Freire, 1970/1993) notion of community in an attempt to create the preconditions for a community of learners to emerge to varying degrees of success.

However, it is the case that several student participants initially felt "intimidated" by, and at times "excluded" from, the community of the classroom. Although, it is difficult to identify if this feeling of exclusion was based in reality or if it was the perception of a typical high-school student. Perceptions of exclusion could stem from feelings of intimidation or a lack of knowledge, which hindered students' ability to contribute to classroom conversation. A lack of contribution could have negatively affected the formation of meaningful relationships within the classroom and a lack of engagement. It is crucial that all students feel safe in the classroom because "it is the absence of a feeling of safety that often promotes prolonged silence or lack of student engagement" (hooks, 1994, p. 39). A lack of engagement not only negatively affects the learning experience of the individual student, but, in turn, has a negative influence on the entire classroom community. In most cases, these feelings of intimidation and exclusion

were largely overcome by the end of the semester and did not apply to the majority of students that experienced the atmosphere in the class as a positive community experience. Initially most students felt unfamiliar with the new process of learning and felt a certain level of unease, however the development of a supportive classroom community from mutual involvement in a collaborative experience outside of the classroom caused most students to feel positively towards the program.

Student participants credited an improved sense of group cohesion to the impact of a team-building experience, which occurred on the field trip to the farm. This led some participants to suggest that the Leadership in Social Justice Program introduce team-building initiatives as early as possible in the program to immediately "break the ice" and "improve group cohesion." Unfortunately, the problem of feeling excluded was not entirely resolved and, even late in the semester, at least two others continued to feel a degree of exclusion.

An early intervention to promote team building may not have affected the outcome for these students who did not identify a positive change in their experience. It would seem to be the case that regardless of such team building efforts, not every student will come to the point of feeling included especially in a relatively short-term experience such as this. hooks (2010) asserts that she does not begin to teach before laying the foundation for building a community by establishing a familiarity between each member of the classroom. This shows the importance of such early efforts as a precondition for successful teaching especially given the challenges built into such a program that included the difficult transition for students as they encountered a new educational paradigm. As evidenced by student feedback, a sense of community was created for the

majority of student participants by the end of the semester, resulting in a positive educational atmosphere experienced by the vast majority of students. John, I believe, could improve the experience of students that initially did not experience a sense of community, or those that felt intimidated in class discussion, by laying the foundation for community and familiarity among students at the very beginning of the program. This familiarity would help to foster the creation of a democratic setting where everyone feels a responsibility and a desire to contribute. However, given the nature of educating for social justice, one must recognize that even if every effort is made to establish a classroom community, not everyone will be ready to partake in it. Complete inclusivity may be an ideal that needs to be worked towards and not expected.

The Challenge of Change

The Leadership in Social Justice Program did not follow the same self-pacing format that students had become accustomed to throughout their time at Northridge Secondary School. John imposed strict deadlines for work completion and the expectation that students would attend class to contribute to collaborative learning opportunities. Rob identified that the difficulty students found with the transition "caused some great angst for John in the structure that he needed within his classroom." John had expectations that required students to complete work and many students seemed to lack the skills, experience, and/or discipline necessary to work within the constraints of imposed timelines. This shift from what students described as a "traditional," self-paced program to having to adhere to deadlines in an "untraditional" program is central to explaining why some students had trouble meeting the expectations of the course, most particularly, completing work within a set period of time.

A clear articulation of the goals and expectations of the Leadership in Social Justice Program may have helped to alleviate frustrations felt by students during their transition to a new educational paradigm. It is clear that John had expectations for the Leadership in Social Justice Program and student participants; however, John may not have communicated his expectations to students effectively. Students clearly articulated their frustrations with John's lack of organization regarding the expectations of the course. John attempted to give the students free reign to invest in the course, but by not providing students with clear expectations for work he created a lack of focus, which ultimately left students feeling lost. The critical educator faces the difficult task of allowing students to direct their learning, while also providing a framework to direct their focus and efforts in the classroom. Freire (1992/1996) acknowledges that teaching is always directive, but should not be manipulative. In this sense, teachers are responsible for facilitating a partnership between students and the teacher where the responsibilities of each are clearly articulated to avoid confusion and conflict. A collaborative discussion at the onset of the program through which students are challenged with the task of defining expectations for themselves, the teacher, and the program may help to alleviate the frustrations that were felt by students. This discussion could serve as a transitory process whereby students could differentiate between the education they had previously encountered, be that the traditional education they experienced before coming to Northridge Secondary School or the self-paced program at the school, and this new educational paradigm. As a result of this exploration, student participants could develop strategies to adjust their style of learning and to develop clear expectations for their new circumstances as students in the Leadership in Social Justice Program.

In addition, clear definitions of social justice and a definition of the outcomes of a program that intends to teach for social justice were not established at the onset of the program. This lack of precision denied the class the opportunity to have a common reference point (or clearly defined different perspectives) to direct their collective efforts. Without a clear understanding of the term social justice (and recognizing that it is a contested concept) it was difficult for students to become leaders in it. An educator conducting a program under the title Leadership in Social Justice has a responsibility to explore this term in considerable detail. This may also contribute to improving group cohesion by uniting the classroom around more sophisticated understanding of the concept. In future iterations of the program, an in-depth exploration of the term social justice should exist to unite and better prepare student participants that embark on this program.

Clear expectations for students may also help to alleviate what John described as an "agonizing" realization that some of the students took advantage of him by choosing to complete less work, and lower quality work than they were capable of producing. John took responsibility for this and pointed out in our follow-up discussion that the workload of the course was "pretty light" in terms of "book hours" and admits that he "let them get away with kind of lower quantitative expectations." He attributes this to both a lack of organization and to "flat out laziness" on the part of the students. In the first offering of the program, John attempted to grant students freedom by "letting them decide what the course is going to be about but then putting it in a framework of expectations." However, a more complete plan, adjusted to fit the particularities of this class would have aligned more closely with critical pedagogical theory which requires

that the teacher be directive but not authoritative. From this experience, John plans to "set more ambitious expectations" that "actually keeps them busy" for the second offering of the program.

Students expressed frustrations after returning to the routine of their self-paced programs. As a result of their experience in the Leadership in Social Justice Program, students heightened their awareness of new educational paradigms, established an enhanced ability to articulate their criticisms of education, and many experienced a shift in their perceptions of education. Many students identified their motivation to succeed in the Leadership in Social Justice Program differed from their motivation to "make the mark" in traditional classes. Students became motivated by other factors that included (a) the relevance of course material, (b) the success of their campaigns, (c) their impact on the community, and (d) their growth as individual learners. Students described this shift in motivation as "learning for yourself" as opposed to "learning for school." This shift in students' motivation made returning to a program that focused on prescribed academic content very difficult. After returning to traditional classes, some students recognized that they felt less connected to the content that was presented in their traditional classes and, as a result, lacked the motivation to complete course work. Students suggested that the Leadership and Social Justice Program be moved to second semester to avoid the difficult transition from what students described as an untraditional to a traditional educational program. Both Sarah and Rob agreed that the Leadership in Social Justice Program would be better suited for the last semester of the academic year. This would avoid the difficult transition students experienced reverting back to their traditional

education for an additional semester after experiencing a new educational paradigm that had caused them to become critical of their previous education experience.

Implications

This study shows that, as hooks (2003) puts it, it is possible to find "open spaces in closed systems" (p. 74). Critical pedagogy can, indeed, be infused into established educational institutions and both teachers and administrators have a role as critical agents in changing educational paradigms. It also demonstrates that doing so involves educators and students alike in a complex relationship that requires a sophisticated understanding of the principles of critical pedagogy and clarity with respect to the role of all involved. Arguably, John's misinterpretation and unfamiliarity with critical pedagogical theory regarding the role of the teacher contributed to some of the difficulties that he and the students experienced. As a result, this study further emphasized the importance of praxis (Freire, 1970/1993), the interplay between theory, practice, and reflection, in the successful implementation of alternative educational paradigms.

Additionally, this study demonstrates that a worthwhile educational experience can be achieved within the limited timeframe of one semester; however, to maximize the impact of this experience, particular attention must be paid to a transitory process for students moving from one educational paradigm to another. It is essential that this process includes a clear articulation, preferably through a collaborative discussion, that identifies the roles and expectations of each contributing member of the classroom, both students and teachers. An articulation of clear expectations will allow students to engage in educational opportunities to develop skills that can be utilized in future experiences.

The support of the administration also plays a vital role in the development and implementation of a successful alternate educational paradigm. Collaboratively teachers and the administrator were able to create an opportunity for students to experience critical pedagogical processes, including self-directed learning, and collaborative discussion, within the current constraints of the Ontario secondary school curriculum.

Issues of power and authority may have hindered the success of these pedagogical processes. Educators must be wary of their innate authority in the classroom and express this power imbalance explicitly to students. Again, a greater understanding of critical pedagogy theory by the teacher may have helped to emphasize the importance of this issue. However, the critical educator must anticipate conflict in his/her practice and remain flexible. Students and teachers can be resistant to critical pedagogical processes that challenge them, but this challenge is necessary to overcome traditional ways of thinking and doing. Teachers must create the preconditions for a classroom environment that allows students to feel safe to express their ideas and concerns without judgment. Educators must also be mindful of the emotional climate of the classroom to avoid situations where students lack a feeling of safety which could promote "prolonged silence or lack of student engagement" (hooks, 1994, p. 39). A lack of engagement could create a feeling of exclusion among students and negatively impact the sense of community that develops in the classroom.

The strong sense of community that developed in the classroom indicates the importance of the creation of a safe environment when engaging in critical pedagogical practice. Critical pedagogical processes, including self-directed learning and collaborative discussion, allowed for student participants to find connections between the

material and their lives. The relevance of course material and a sense of community were integral to the success that the program achieved and the positive experience felt by most student participants. The interdisciplinary organization of the four-credit program that recruited students based on mutual interest, positively impacted community development and should be replicated in future iterations of the program.

A study of future iterations of the program, where a greater familiarity with critical pedagogy is demonstrated by the teacher, and a clearer understanding of goals and expectations by student participants, would offer greater insight into the potential of the program. My involvement with the program was limited to the course of one semester and shortly thereafter while conducting qualitative interviews. A longitudinal study may offer greater insight into the long-term effect of the program by identifying how the lapse of time changed how students viewed their experience.

Sarah identified that in its initial conception, the program was structured to incorporate a community outreach aspect through each campaign group. The campaign group that did complete their outreach outside of Northridge Secondary School had a positive experience with this aspect of the program, while students that campaigned within the school encountered some level of frustration. This experience raises the issue of community outreach and its impact on student participants and their perceptions of social justice. Further study of the effectiveness of secondary students working on social justice in the community is required.

Research is required to identify more examples of social justice and critical pedagogy infused programs in varying contexts to better understand what effect such a program would elicit with a different classroom dynamic. A similarly organized program

with a different variation of teachers and students would undoubtedly wield distinctive results. The program participants in the context of this study volunteered to participate based on their mutual interest in issues of social justice. How would the experience of participants change if their participation in the program was required and was not voluntary? The sense of the community that developed as a result of participation in this program was positively impacted by the mutual interest in issues of social justice that participants shared. It would be interesting to see how a sense of community would develop without the existence of this mutual interest.

A diverse group of participants would also help to establish a clearer vision of the complexities of implementing such programs in varied contexts. hooks (1994) explains that in homogeneous classrooms it is "crucial that 'whiteness' be studied, understood, discussed- so that everyone learns that affirmation of multiculturalism, and an unbiased inclusive perspective, can and should be present whether or not people of color are present" (p. 43). Transformations in homogeneous classrooms are challenging and weigh heavily on the educator to initiate an exploration of Whiteness. In the homogenous setting of the Leadership in Social Justice classroom, the intervention of the teacher is necessary to affirm issues of diversity are addressed. In future iterations of critical pedagogical practice, this intervention should be more pronounced in the context of homogeneous classrooms.

Another Hopeful Conclusion

Despite the difficulties associated with the first version of the program, the Leadership in Social Justice Program impacted the student participants positively in a variety of ways, most particularly students' perceptions of an awareness of themselves,

how they view their place in the world, and their perceptions of education. Participants cited an increased sense of self-awareness including the development of personal value systems, which constitute for them an exciting and impactful element of the program that "gave direction" for their futures. The Leadership in Social Justice Program also exposed students to a variety of social justice issues and taught them some of the conceptual and organizational skills to conduct a practical campaign to address social injustices. The program also helped to change students' perceptions of themselves in relation to the world around them and their perceptions of education. With respect to this latter point, many students left the program holding much higher expectations with respect to what their educational experience should offer them and were made aware of their own responsibility to be active agents in their own learning. The majority of participants viewed their involvement in the program as being overwhelmingly positive despite whatever concerns they might have had about particular debates. As we have seen, however, a few individuals' cited frustrations with the program more frequently than positive experiences. I am convinced that if the changes that I have proposed in these pages are implemented in the future, fewer students will feel these frustrations.

Educators that engage in critical pedagogical practice will undoubtedly require a clear understanding of critical pedagogical theory as a necessary tool to engage in praxis, an ongoing cyclical relationship between theory, application, and reflection (Freire, 1970/1993). In the context of the Leadership in Social Justice Program, John attempted to conceive and implement the program with the Freirean tenets of critical pedagogy, although, as I suggested, some tenets were not interpreted accurately. It is within these areas of misinterpretation that problematic responses occurred. The ways in which the

educators of the Leadership in Social Justice Program adhered to the tenets of critical

pedagogical theory created positive educational experiences for students. When John

misinterpreted/disregarded critical pedagogical theory, most particularly by being so

assertive during class discussion, frustrations from student participants resulted. Like

many teachers, John was trained in teacher-centred pedagogical practices. That, coupled

with his passion about the issues under discussion, combined to cause him to lose sight of

the student-centered pedagogy (that nonetheless involves teacher leadership) that he

espoused. A process that involves rigorous self-reflection is necessary to facilitate this

change and to break free of traditional educational paradigms. This transition must also

include an exploration of how knowledge is constructed in any educational paradigm,

including alternative programming. What issues are stressed, what issues are ignored and

why? Additionally, a clear interpretation of critical pedagogy necessitates authenticity in

educating for social justice. Not only do authentic experiences provide a deeper and

more meaningful understanding of social justice, they also limit the possibility of an

overly heavy handed intervention by the teacher which was the case in the social justice

program.

It is difficult to authentically engage in critical pedagogy and social justice within

an educational structure that explicitly supports and legitimatizes neoliberalism.

Although I believe that this case study provides an example, as the title of my thesis

claims, of an open space in a closed system, one must consider the possibility that by

establishing programs that utilize these open spaces in a flawed system, they become

positioned as necessary dissent that legitimatizes the flawed system even further. As

educators, we must break the mold of old patterns internally, by continuing to extend the

reach of social justice education in schools. Furthermore, one isolated incident of critical pedagogy with a social justice perspective in an Ontario secondary school classroom does not indicate that sufficient effort has been made to incorporate these perspectives in the current pedagogical climate. However, I believe this isolated incident will lead to a broader change systematically by offering an example of how social justice can be enacted in the education institution and by offering concrete strategies to dispel the fears of educators that may otherwise be inclined to teach from this perspective.

The challenges facing educators that embark on the task of teaching from a critical pedagogical and social justice perspective must be faced with the hope that positive social change can be made within the realities of a given context. However, hope must not be viewed as a substitute for the action necessary to make positive social change, but rather be based in the belief that critical pedagogical strategies will challenge students to identify unjust circumstances within their own individual realities. As Dower (2008) suggests, as students become aware of themselves as local and global citizens as a result of their engagement in critical pedagogical practice, students will decide for themselves if they wish to move beyond this awareness to become engaged and active citizens. The pedagogy of hope in the critical classroom is a central tenet of the work of Paulo Freire (1970/1993). Hopelessness "silences, paralyzes, and immobilizes, while hope ignites a passionate pursuit of social justice, a primary goal of critical pedagogy" (Freire, 1970/1993, p. 91). Hope that social change can occur initiates the struggle against injustice but that hope must be accompanied by educational practices that prepare students for ongoing engagement in the struggle for social justice (Freire, 1992/1996).

The Leadership in Social Justice Program was initiated by the conviction of two

educators and an administrator that their school could be a place where students were prepared to play a leadership role in the struggle for social justice, a hope they did not lose despite the challenges presented by the implementation of the program. Without such sustained hope, social change on behalf of social justice is not possible.

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Appendix A

Research Ethics Board Clearance Letter

File # 09-067

Appendix B

First Student Questionnaire

Northridge Secondary School Leadership in Social Justice Program

The pseudonym you want to be known by: _____

Gender: M   F Age: ____

1. What attracted you to take the Northridge Leadership in Social Justice program?

2. What campaign group were (are) you in?

3. Can you tell me a story of your best experience with this program? A time that excited you? Motivated you? Why was this such a good experience?

4. What do you value about this interdisciplinary program?

5. Has this program changed how you view school and what it can offer students? If yes, how? If no, how do you view school?

6. How has this program changed how you view your role in the community? If yes, how? If not, how do you see your role in the community?

7. If in 3 years your school had the best program in Ontario what would it look like?

8. The title of this program is Northridge Secondary School Leadership in Social Justice. What do you understand social justice to mean? Has your understanding of social justice changed as a result of this program?

9. The information you are sharing with us will be used to inform principals and teachers about this program. Do you have any messages you want to share about this program that you haven't touched on in your other answers.

Appendix C

Second Student Questionnaire

Northridge Secondary School Leadership in Social Justice Program

The name you used on the first questionnaire: _____

What grade were you in when you started at Northridge? _____

1.　　Many students in this program said that they were motivated to take it for a variety of reasons including feeling bored with school and wanting something different; wanting to learn something socially relevant; and wanting to make a difference in their community. Still others cited a specific interest in philosophy or social justice as a theme.

　　　(a) Do you think that these reasons would appeal to a wide range of 17 year old students or only to a small minority of students such as those in this program?

　　　(b) How important is the issue of "wanting to make a difference in the community" to you. Do you think you have the motivation to remain involved in the community during your university and post-university years?

2.　　Most students commented on the importance of the sense of community that developed among students in this program and many suggested that began with the trip to the organic farm. Keeping in mind this sense of community and its possible impact on you and your fellow students:

　　　(i)　Did you feel safe expressing your views when controversial issues were being discussed in this class?
　　　(ii)　Did the way controversial issues were discussed in class change after your trip to the organic farm?
　　　(iii)　Did you like or dislike class-wide discussions/debate on controversial issues?
　　　(iv)　Did you find some issues harder to deal with or more controversial than others?

　　　(b) A number of students felt that Mr. Hammer clearly made his views known to the class and not everyone seemed to be comfortable with that. What do you think is the role of the teacher when discussing controversial subjects? Should the teacher express his/her views or simply act as an impartial moderator?

3.　　Recalling your experiences prior to coming to Northridge, did you ever experience a similar sense of community at school? If so, briefly describe this situation. If not, what factors do you think made building such a community difficult in a "regular" school?

4.　　To what extent did the course material in Mr. Hammer's portion of the program and the philosophy class taught by Ms. Martin mesh as a coherent whole and impact on student learning? Were the two aspects of the program quite distinct or were they more or less a seamless whole?

Appendix D

Student Interview Guidelines

The following questions guided student interviews:

1. In what ways did you find the class relevant to your life? Do you account this relevance to the course material or to your ability to choose the subject area of your major project?

2. Many students cited "a sense of community" as being an exciting and essential important aspect of the program. What did a "sense of community" in the classroom mean to you? What does it mean to you now that the program has ended? How did this change your experience in the classroom? How was this developed? Did it change over time? Did the sense of community created in the classroom extend beyond the classroom and into the school?

3. During class discussions, how comfortable were you contributing your own opinion? Did this change over time? How were the discussions structured? Was the opinion of each member of the class valued in the same way? The teacher included? Are you now more comfortable contributing to discussion in your current classes? Other settings?

4. How did this program change your view of traditional education (if at all)? How did this program change you view of the role of the teacher (if at all)? After experiencing this program, do you feel as though educating for social justice has the potential to occur in all subject areas? In all schools?

5. Having experienced the program, how do you feel your familiarity with issues of social justice has changed? To what extent do you feel you would be able to articulate yourself in a discussion about social justice issues?

6. Now that you have had time to reflect back on your semester, do you feel as though the Northridge Social Justice and Leadership program was a positive experience for you? In ways has the program positively influenced your life? Be as specific as possible.

7. If you had the power to do so, what changes would you make to the social justice in leadership program if it were to run again next year?

Appendix E

Interview Guidelines for John Hammer

The following questions guided the interview with lead teacher, John Hammer:

1. How many students are registered in this program? How many males? How many females?

2. Are there any other distinguishing features of this group of students?

3. What was the best experience you had teaching this program?

4. What was the worst experience you had teaching this program?

5. What did you value most from the experience of teaching this program?

6. Do you think that this type of integrated, cross-disciplinary program would appeal to a wide range of Grade 12 students? Do you think an age/grade appropriate version of this kind of program could be offered to younger students?

7. A number of students felt that you imposed (their term) your views on the class while others said that you certainly made your personal opinions very clear. What is your thinking about the role of the teacher in a program such as this with respect to expressing your views, challenging students to (re)consider their perspectives and so forth? Would you consider not being as forthright in the future given what appears to be widespread student concern about this issue?

8. One student commented on the irony that to engage in a social change project they needed the permission of the principal and on one occasion (the lasagna lunch) apparently this didn't happen and there was some negative feedback as a result. Can you comment on the limitations and possibilities of conducting a social justice/social change program within the confines of a school setting?

9. A sense of being part of a team or an in-class community was frequently cited as an exciting and essential characteristic of this program. Many commented that this began to happen during the visit to the organic farm and that prior to that event the class was divided debate/discussions on controversial issues. Can you comment on the dynamic in the class prior to the visit to the farm and after? Did debate on controversial issues continue to happen after the visit to the farm? Do you think that the impact of these discussions had on the class was different before and after a sense of community was achieved?

10. Most students had trouble defining social justice. One cited you as writing on a blog that "that is a good question" when a student raised this issue. What importance, if any, do you attach to students leaving this program with a clear vision of what they understand by this term? What "essential understandings" do you think it is important that the students take with them?

11. Do you think that you were you able to fully integrate the issues into your classes that the students were dealing with in the philosophy class?

12. To what extent were you and Ms. Martin able to effectively collaborate in the development and implementation of this program?

13. At the beginning of this program you undoubtedly had a vision as to what you wanted to achieve? Would you say that this vision was realized? Has the vision been modified? What factors influenced this?

14. In your opinion, how has this program impacted student intellectual and personal growth?

15. Given your experience with this first time offering of the Social Justice program, are there any changes of an organizational or curricular nature that you would make assuming this program is offered next Fall?

Appendix F

Interview Guidelines for Sarah Martin

The following questions guided the interview with teacher, Sarah Martin:

1. To what extent were you and John Hammer able to effectively collaborate in the development and implementation of this program? Principal Rob Clark?

2. At the beginning of this program you undoubtedly had a vision as to what you wanted to achieve? Would you say that this vision was realized? Has the vision been modified? What factors influenced this?

3. What do you value most about this program?

4. What was the best experience you had with this program?

5. What was the worst experience you had with this program?

6. To what extent were the students able to demonstrate the knowledge/ experience gained in Mr. Hammer's class in the philosophy class? To what extent were the students able to demonstrate to knowledge/ experience gained in the philosophy class demonstrated in Mr. Hammer's class? In the school? In the community?

7. A sense of being part of a team or an in-class community was frequently cited as an exciting and essential characteristic of this program. In what ways was a sense of community fostered in the philosophy class? How did the students demonstrate this? Was there a particular event that changed student interaction and contributed to a sense of community being achieved?

8. How was the program received throughout the community of Northridge Secondary School? In what ways do you see the program represented throughout the school?

9. In your opinion, how has this program impacted student intellectual and personal growth?

10. Do you think that this type of integrated, cross disciplinary program would appeal to a wide range of Grade 12 students? Do you think an age/grade appropriate version of this kind of program could be offered to younger students?

11. Given your experience with this first time offering of the Social Justice program, are there any changes of an organizational or curricular nature that you would make assuming this program is offered next Fall?

Appendix G

Interview Guidelines for Rob Clark

The following questions guided the interview with principal, Rob Clark:

1. To what extent were you Mr. Hammer and Ms. Martin able to effectively collaborate in the development and implementation of this program?

2. At the beginning of this program you undoubtedly had a vision as to what you wanted to achieve? Would you say that this vision was realized? Has the vision been modified? What factors influenced this?

3. What do you value most about this program?

4. What was the best experience you had with this program?

5. What was the worst experience you had with this program?

6. How was the program received throughout the community of Northridge Secondary School? In what ways do you see the program represented throughout the school?

7. In your opinion, how has this program impacted student intellectual and personal growth?

8. Do you think that this type of integrated, cross-disciplinary program would appeal to a wide range of Grade 12 students? Do you think an age/grade appropriate version of this kind of program could be offered to younger students?

9. Given your experience with this first time offering of the Social Justice program, are there any changes of an organizational or curricular nature that you would make assuming this program is offered next Fall?