

UC Berkeley

UC Berkeley Electronic Theses and Dissertations

Title

Experience, Knowledge Construction, and Ideology: Dilemmas in Critical Thinking and Social Justice Education

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/3k72v4gc>

Author

Tien, Joanne

Publication Date

2019

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

Experience, Knowledge Construction, and Ideology: Dilemmas in Critical Thinking and Social
Justice Education

By

Joanne Tien

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Education

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Daniel Perlstein, Chair

Professor Kris Gutiérrez

Professor Ula Taylor

Summer 2019

Experience, Knowledge Construction, and Ideology: Dilemmas in Critical Thinking and Social Justice Education

© 2019

By Joanne Tien

Abstract

Experience, Knowledge Construction, and Ideology: Dilemmas in Critical Thinking and Social Justice Education

by

Joanne Tien

Doctor of Philosophy in Education

University of California, Berkeley

Professor Daniel Perlstein, Chair

At present, there are two priorities within social justice education that have taken center stage. The first is the task of ending oppression, and the second is the task of affirming the individuality and freedom of the child. Social justice educators advocate a non-hierarchical approach to learning that centers students' self-directed construction of knowledge from their experiences, while at the same time expecting students to develop an explicit critique of the social order (Freire, 1998; Shor, 1992). These pedagogical practices can be considered *progressive* or *constructivist*. Though both "progressive education" and "constructivist education" have been used to refer to a range of philosophical assumptions and practices (Labaree, 2005; Phillips, 1995), they generally refer to "a set of theories that hold that knowledge is not a body of facts, skills, and interpretations to be transmitted to students, but rather is actively constructed by learners as they interact with their environment" (Perlstein, 2002, p. 270). However, the use of progressive or constructivist pedagogical approaches for the pursuit of explicit ideological goals leaves critical educators with a dilemma: what happens when students' reflections don't lead them to conclusions that challenge oppression? In other words, how should educators respond when "critical" thinking does not lead to the "critical" conclusions that social justice teachers advocate (ie, ones that challenge systems of oppression)?

This study draws from ethnography (LeCompte & Schensul, 2010), autoethnography (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011), action research (Herr & Anderson, 2005), and social design experimentation (Gutiérrez & Jurow, 2016) to examine the tensions involved in using constructivist pedagogical approaches to cultivate students' critique of oppression and commitment to social justice values. Data included video recordings of classroom dialogues, field notes, student written assignments, and teacher and student interviews collected from three sections of an undergraduate teacher education class at an elite public university during the Spring of 2017. Drawing from critical and feminist pedagogies, the course (ED280)¹ used a constructivist approach that privileged students' self-directed learning, the construction of knowledge from experience, and the creation of a democratic classroom within a formal school setting. At the same time, ED280 also aimed to cultivate students' critique of oppression and commitment to social justice through social action. Taught by three instructors of differing racial

¹ Names have been changed to protect participants' identities.

backgrounds (myself, an Asian American woman; Sarah, a white woman; and Tiana, a Black woman), the course also attracted students from multiple, contradicting, positionalities.

There are three major findings from this study. The first stems from the fact that social justice educators in formal school settings are contradictorily positioned as agents of institutional power, even while they seek to critique such power (and thus undermine their own authority). This paradox led social justice educators like Sarah to send mixed messages to her students regarding both the nature of her authority and the seriousness of the social justice objectives of the course. At times, Sarah leveraged her authority to advance social justice ideals, and at other times, she undermined her own authority at the expense of those ideals. However, in prioritizing the development of students' social justice critique over the creation of a "democratic" classroom space, Tiana was still able to use constructivist pedagogical practices and create a largely democratic classroom. These findings illustrate the importance of first grounding constructivist pedagogical practices in an explicit critique of oppression, particularly in formal school settings where hierarchical relationships of power and authority are inherent to the educational space.

This study also finds that because students construct knowledge from an environment already imbued with oppression, the experiences from which they construct knowledge are often complex and contradictory, leading them to take up and critique dominant ideologies in complex and contradictory ways. While a constructivist pedagogical approach supported some students in making sense of their own experiences of oppression, at times, it also served to justify students' pre-existing ideologies, rather than to support them in constructing new knowledges. This occurred in part because students occupied multiple, contradicting positionalities – thus, their experiences (and interpretations of those experiences) at times reflected the critique of oppression that ED280 aimed to cultivate, and at other times, contradicted it.

Finally, this study examines how critical and feminist pedagogies can become conflated because they draw on similar constructivist roots. In particular, I examine the tensions involved in using a Freirean framework to teach students about their positionalities. In analyzing two pedagogical events that aimed to teach students about their positionalities – the Privilege Walk and the Identity Wheel – I find that students developed essentialized notions of identity within an "oppressed/oppressor" framework, even when their own experiences contradicted such binary understandings of experience. As a result, students came to conflate *positionality* with *identity*, understanding it as static and fixed, rather than socially constructed and malleable. This led students, particularly students from positionalities of relative privilege, to reject the instructor's call for students to participate in social action, as they understood themselves to be defined by their identities, rather than by their actions.

Within education, progressive and constructivist pedagogical practices have become dominant in the field (Phillips, 1995) as a means for addressing an array of social, educational, and economic problems. This study illustrates some of the contradictions that arise in relying on progressive pedagogical practices to address such structural inequalities, as well as how teachers and students navigated these challenges in practice. In so doing, this research encourages scholars, educators, and activists to prioritize the development of students' critique of oppression over progressive pedagogical practices, and thus contributes to scholarship in social justice education, teacher education, and curriculum theory.

**For those working towards another world,
who is on her way**

Table of Contents

I.	Acknowledgements.....	iii
II.	Chapter 1. Introduction	1
III.	Chapter 2. Theoretical Framework..... Race and the History of Progressive Education	12
IV.	Chapter 3. Literature Review.....	26
V.	Chapter 4. Data, Methods, & Research Design.....	33
VI.	Chapter 5. “Democratic” Education and the Dilemma of Teaching Against Oppression.....	37
VII.	Chapter 6. Experience, Knowledge Construction, and Ideology: Dilemmas in the use of Constructivism to Teach Social Justice.....	62
VIII.	Chapter 7. Teaching Identity vs. Positionality: Dilemmas in Critical and Feminist Pedagogies in Practice.....	79
IX.	Chapter 8. Conclusion.....	94

Acknowledgements

This dissertation would not be possible without the guidance and support of those both in and outside the academy who have mentored me in this journey. I never would have pursued graduate school had it not been for the inspiration of Grace Lee Boggs and those who introduced me to her – Matthew Birkhold, Amaka Okechukwu, and Corbin Laedlein. It was through Grace’s life and words that I was pushed to imagine a different kind of world and the educational projects that could inspire it.

Graduate school would not have been possible were it not for the community of friends and scholars I met along way. I am especially grateful to my writing group, Rene Kissell, Alyse Schneider, Mahasan Chaney, and Rekia Jibrin. Rene, thank you for always asking the hard questions, and for pushing me to consider both the political and intellectual contributions of my scholarship. Alyse, I cannot appreciate you more for your incisive critique of constructivism. Thank you for reading drafts of this work with such great care. Mahasan, thank you for being my cohort-mate through the entire graduate experience and for your consistently sharp feedback. Rekia, you’ve taught me what it means to be scholar, mother, friend, all at the same time, and to center one’s full humanity in the process.

I’m also grateful to the scholars who have come before me, and have shown me how to be a committed organizer, scholar, mentor, and friend, and above all else, great human beings. Kenzo, thank you for being a mentor to so many of us, for always being willing to give advice, and for teaching us how to navigate the academy strategically as young organizers and scholars of color. Becky, thank you for being a fourth advisor to this dissertation. You brought me into labor organizing as a graduate student – an experience that, with all its challenges and contradictions – has shaped both my political and intellectual growth, and is reflected in this work, even if not in obvious ways. Thank you for letting me ask all the questions, and for being a constant and supportive mentor. Nirali, Jarvis, Leah, Tadashi, Bayley, Rachel, Frankie, Damien, Erin, Juliet – thank you for allowing me to learn from and with you, and for the excellent feedback you gave me in research group. I’ve also been lucky to grow intellectually through the many other friendships I formed during my time in graduate school. Krista, Nicole, Blanca, Derrika, Michael – thank you both for your friendship, and your willingness to work towards a better university and GSE.

This dissertation is also very much the product of my collaboration with those who have made ED280 possible. Christyna, your commitment to critical pedagogy and democratic education has consistently inspired me. Thank you both for your mentorship as an instructor and for being a thought partner in the design and teaching of ED280. Rex, Gabby, and Zina, thank you for allowing me to learn from you and your students. And above all, I am deeply grateful to Sarah and Tiana for allowing me to study and learn from your practice, and to all the students who participated in this study.

I have been blessed with a phenomenal dissertation committee. To my advisor, Daniel Perlstein, thank you for always asking the weird questions – the ones that have also pushed my thinking and forever shaped the way I understand the social world. I am deeply grateful to Kris Gutiérrez, who has both shaped the field in which I am a scholar, and taught me how to situate my work within it. Your mentorship has been critical to my professional development. To Ula Taylor, thank you for your steadfast commitment to this intellectual project and for both your intellectual guidance and encouragement along the way.

I am also grateful to the many other faculty who have supported me along this journey. I want to give special thanks to Glynda Hull and Erin Murphy-Graham for helping me think through the design of ED280. Thomas Philip has also pushed me to consider the nuances within constructivism and encouraged me to deepen my analysis in its final stretch. Travis Bristol has also been incredibly supportive and a critical mentor in my professional development as a scholar.

Finally, I want to thank my family, both chosen and given. Hyejin Shim has been with me every step of the PhD journey, both the highs and the lows. My housemates, Stacy Suh and Yadira Sanchez have seen me through all the waves of frustration and excitement that come with the final stretch of the dissertation. To my political family: Sammie Wills, Mika Hernandez, Mashael Majid, Kubo Ikino, Charlene Khoo, Claudia Leung, Catherine Fung, Jasmin Hoo, Fei Mok, Sarah Lee, Cass Chen, Sine Hwang Jensen, Dart Kaufman, Mouna Benmoussa, Rosa Ortega, Marie Choi, Afomeia Tesfai, Survived and Punished, EUJ, thank you. You've grown me both personally and politically, and for that I am forever grateful. Irene Toro Martinez, Brooke Rosen, Shreya Saraf, Skye Lei, Eunice Kim, Julie Braker, Sarah Tupper, Sarah Chelius: thank you for being part of my chosen family. My parents and brother have been unconditionally supportive, and more than anyone else, my mom has inspired me through her love of learning.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Critical educators have long articulated the need to replace the existing school system with a liberatory alternative. Among other things, scholars have critiqued the current education system for being a mechanism of bureaucratic and state control (Bourdieu, Wacquant, & Farage, 1994; Illich, 1971), reproducing capitalist relations of exploitation (Althusser, 1971; Bowles & Gintis, 1977), stifling individual autonomy (Dewey, 1899), being a technology of surveillance and disciplinary power that “normalizes” social behavior (Foucault, 1979), and colonizing the mind (Fanon, 1952; Woodson, 1933). At the same time, nearly all critical educators also hold to the notion that education can indeed be a force of liberatory social change. Where they disagree lies in how this might take form and what a liberatory alternative might look like. Given the proliferation of “social justice” initiatives within schooling today, delineation of the tensions, contradictions, and points of unity between the various ideologies that all claim to be advancing “liberatory” education is important for critical educators seeking to create radical alternatives for the future.

At present, there are two priorities within social justice education that have taken center stage. The first is the task of ending oppression, and the second is the task of affirming the individuality and freedom of the child. Social justice educators advocate a non-hierarchical approach to learning that centers students’ self-directed construction of knowledge from their experiences, while at the same time expecting students to develop an explicit critique of the social order (Freire, 1998; Shor, 1992). The use of such progressive or constructivist² approaches for the pursuit of explicit ideological goals leaves critical educators with a dilemma: what happens when students’ reflections don’t lead them to conclusions that challenge oppression? In other words, how should educators respond when “critical” thinking does not lead to the “critical” conclusions that social justice teachers advocate (ie, ones that challenge capitalism, white supremacy, heteropatriarchy, settler colonialism, and other systems of oppression)?

This study draws from ethnography (LeCompte & Schensul, 2010), autoethnography (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011), action research (Herr & Anderson, 2005), and social design experimentation (Gutiérrez & Jurow, 2016) to examine the tensions involved in using constructivist pedagogical approaches to cultivate students’ critique of existing social inequalities and commitment to social justice values in an undergraduate teacher education class. Given both the prevalence of inequalities in education, and the growing popularity of using constructivist pedagogies to address these inequalities (Perlstein, 2002; Rodriguez, 1998), examination of the tensions involved in doing so has become ever more salient. In so doing, my research helps teachers think more deeply about the political implications of their practices, and contributes to scholarship in social justice education, teacher education, and curriculum theory.

Reflections on Teaching: Researcher Positionality

² Because both “progressive” and “constructivist” education has been used to refer to a range of philosophical assumptions and practices (Labaree, 2005; Phillips, 1995), both terms will be explored in further detail later in this chapter. In general, however, I use the terms “progressivism” and “constructivism” interchangeably to refer to “a set of theories that hold that knowledge is not a body of facts, skills, and interpretations to be transmitted to students, but rather is actively constructed by learners as they interact with their environment” (Perlstein, 2002, p. 270).

My interest in this research extends from my own experiences as a social justice educator attempting to actualize a prefigurative politic in my classroom – one that sought to prefigure a more democratic and just world through the centering of students’ agency, autonomy, and humanity – while also cultivating students’ explicit critique of existing social relations. However, I haven’t always been an activist and it is my own political and ideological trajectory that brings me to my interests in education and the possibilities of social change. Growing up in a conservative, Evangelical, ethnic enclave in New York City, it was only slowly that I realized that the challenges I experienced as a working-class child of immigrants was tied to larger systems of power and inequality, and that I was empowered to contest them. It was perhaps this combination of enthusiasm and naivete regarding the mechanisms of larger systems of oppression – and the role that schools play in reproducing them – that made me the perfect recruit for Teach for America.

Upon graduation, I found myself teaching in a public elementary school in a small African-American town in Mississippi. Through this experience, I quickly became critical of Teach for America’s theory of school reform, which favors increased testing, teacher accountability, and the privatization of public education. I found that these policies significantly impeded my students’ learning; instead of actually reading books, my students were expected to read test-based reading passages, and instead of learning how to write, my students needed to memorize the difference between “complex sentences” and “complex compound” sentences.

I left Mississippi because I wanted to spend a year observing another teacher to see if they had the key to some of the questions I found so troubling at the time: How does one teach in a holistic and child-centered manner while juggling the pressures of standardized testing and teacher accountability? Is it possible to “manage” a classroom without using rewards and punishments? What would an ideal classroom even look like? With these questions in mind, and knowing less about charter schools than I did even about Teach for America, I found myself co-teaching at a charter school for another year. Little did I know that despite the “progressive” curriculum it touted, the charter school in which I taught was at the center of the political controversy around charter schools in New York City. As I slowly began to learn more about these issues, I joined the New York Collective of Radical Educators, a leftist group of social justice educators that hosted an affinity group specifically for alternatively certified teachers. My engagement with this group significantly altered my political consciousness. Thus, I became increasingly critical of my charter school’s “no excuses” philosophy of education, which paired a strict discipline policy that was both racialized and gendered, to a corporate culture of conformity for students, and precarity for teachers. I witnessed and felt complicit in the dehumanization my students experienced, and felt dehumanized myself as a teacher. During this time, I also unknowingly joined a Marxist reading group in New York City, which further heightened the cognitive dissonance I experienced on a daily basis.

To resolve this dissonance, and to better understand the contradictions I experienced as a teacher but could not resolve, I decided to apply to graduate school. I entered graduate school deeply interested in imagining a utopian education system. In my Marxist reading group, I had read Paulo Freire, bell hooks, Grace Lee Boggs, and the works of other idealists and revolutionaries. It didn’t take long upon coming to graduate school, however, for me to realize that such utopian visions were far more complicated due to the social, cultural, political, economic, and historic systems in which schools are embedded.

Upon arriving in graduate school, I also became exposed to a number of scholars who theorized the relationship between education and social change, which soon became the crux of

my intellectual interests. In an attempt to take seriously the arguments of these authors, I also became involved in a number of political organizations. Through my experiences organizing with various community-based groups, I became interested in the relationship between pedagogy and social movement building. It is within this context that I began teaching ED280: Democratic Learning and Critical Education, which later became the site of my dissertation research. Embracing both democratic learning and the idea of education as a vehicle for social change, teaching this course demanded that I theorize and actualize a pedagogical practice that both centered students' agency and self-directed learning, while also facilitating students' explicit understanding and critique of larger systems of oppression. It was in attempting to do so that I realized that though both ideals are central to a "liberatory" education, they are not always compatible, and often come into tension. This dissertation is a reflection of my efforts to grapple with these tensions.

Defining Progressive and Constructivist Education

Progressive Education

In thinking about progressive education, a few key principles usually come to mind: 1) emphasis on learning by doing in a natural environment, 2) the cultivation of manual as well as intellectual skills, 3) nurturing of the independence, autonomy, and self-reliance of the child, 4) anticoercive and antiauthoritarian teaching, 5) the fostering of student individuality and a focus on the whole child, 6) pupil participation in decision-making, 7) informal relations between students and teachers, 8) emphasis on reason and critical thinking, 9) cooperative and collaborative learning environments, and 10) education for social responsibility and democracy (Avrich, 1980; Deal & Nolan, 1978; Dewey, 1897; Ferrer, 1913; Graubard, 1972; Rousseau, 1921). Upon closer examination, however, it becomes evident that not all of these objectives are entirely cohesive with each other.

Though the literature on progressive education is expansive, its basic parameters were established by Lawrence Cremin's landmark work *The Transformation of the School: Progressivism in American Education, 1876-1957*. Cremin paints the movement as diverse and self-contradictory, and thus commonly misunderstood. At various points, business interests, trade unionists, educators, and farmers all supported progressive education. This was in part because of the influence of a broad range of intellectuals, including Horace Mann's vision of the common school, William Torrey Harris' valorization of social administration and civil order, Herbert Spencer and William Sumner's Social Darwinism, G. Stanley Hall's developmental psychology, Edward Thorndike's mental testing, William Kilpatrick's "project" method, and George Count's social reformism. According to Cremin, it is because of its diversity that progressive education is often misremembered as a movement that emphasized child-centered classrooms rather than social criticism. As he puts it, progressive education will always "remain little more than a symbol of the educational hopes and despairs of the American people at any given moment in their history" (Cremin, 1964, p.239).

Herbert Kliebard makes a similar critique in his classic work *The Struggle for the American Curriculum, 1893-1958*. According to Kliebard, progressive education as we know it today is the product of over half a century of curriculum debate and reform. Prior to the 1890s, the curriculum status quo was dominated by the doctrine of mental discipline – the belief that

certain subjects of study had the power to strengthen mental faculties such as memory, reasoning, and imagination. However, with industrialization came changes in the social order, including an influx of new immigrants and thus new students into the secondary school system. These changes sparked debates over the types of knowledge that should be valued in the curriculum.

Kliebard divides the interest groups within these debates into four major camps: the humanists, the developmentalists, the social efficiency educators, and the social meliorists. While the humanists emphasized the importance of Western culture and values, and believed that students of all classes could benefit from a humanist education, the developmentalists thought that the curriculum should be based on the “natural order” of development of the child. They disagreed with the humanists in their quest for a common curriculum, and believed that students should be taught according to their particular capacities since they assumed some students were inherently duller than others (Kliebard, 2004, p.12). Social efficiency educators, on the other hand, believed that school administration needed to be governed by “a scientific system of pedagogical management [that] would demand fundamentally the measurement of results in the light of fixed standards” (Kliebard, 2004, p.20). They were primarily concerned with the elimination of waste within the curriculum, particularly, the efficient use of the child’s “capital” and time, and thus aimed for students to be taught according to their “probable destinations” in life. Finally, led by Lester Frank Ward, who is often seen as the father of the welfare state, the social meliorists understood human beings as having the power to intervene intelligently in the forces of nature and that in that power lay the course of social progress. Following from these beliefs, they put their faith in the power of schools to create an alternative social vision, and correct the corruption and inequalities of the new industrial cities.

From Cremin and Kliebard’s works, it is clear that progressive education as we know it today has been shaped by a variety of interests, which gained prominence at different points in time due to various socio-political conditions. Today, it is *pedagogical* progressivism that remains dominant. In fact, pedagogical progressivism remains so popular that David Labaree (2005) has argued that within schools of education “[progressivism]...is largely beyond challenge” (p. 279), and “it is hard to find anyone in an American education school who does not talk the talk and espouse the principles of the progressive creed” (p. 277). When Labaree refers to progressivism, he is specifically describing the salience of *pedagogical progressivism*, otherwise known as *constructivism* (Labaree, 2005, p. 277).

Constructivist Learning

Like progressivism, constructivism too has become a dominant paradigm with scholars such as Ellerton and Clements (1992) explicitly describing it as such. In fact, Phillips (1995) argues that “constructivism has become something akin to a secular religion” (p. 5). In describing constructivism as a “religion,” Phillips highlights the ideological nature of constructivism, as well as the contentiousness of the ideological debates that fall under its umbrella. Like progressive education, constructivism is a broad and diverse category that describes a number of theories and practices. In general, however, constructivism can be described as a theory of learning or meaning making that argues that individuals create their own new understandings on the basis of interaction between what they already know and believe and the ideas, knowledge, and experiences, with which they come into contact (Resnick, 1989;

Richardson, 2003). The central idea behind constructivism is that human learning is constructed, and that learners build new knowledge upon the foundations of previous learning. This stands in contrast to the objectivist view of learning, which dominated learning theory prior to constructivism. Based on the work of behaviorists like Skinner (1953), objectivists argue that information is knowable outside the bounds of any human mind and that any individual interpretation of knowledge can be correct or incorrect. Objectivists see individual pieces of information as symbols that can be transferred from human to human given the correct learning conditions. In contrast, constructivists argue that learning must be active and that learners cannot just be passive recipients of information; rather, they must actively construct new meaning from their environment (Bada & Olusegun, 2015; Tam, 2000).

As a learning theory, constructivism is not a specific pedagogy. But, in practice, pedagogies that draw on constructivist theory tend to emphasize the use of active techniques such as experiments and real-world problem-solving to ask students to create new knowledge and then to reflect on how their understanding changes throughout the process (Bada & Olusegun, 2015). In fact, Tam (2000) argues that constructivist learning environments should include the following four characteristics: 1) the sharing of knowledge between teachers and students; 2) the sharing of authority between teachers and students; 3) the teacher's role as facilitator or guide, rather than as a transmitter of information; and 4) the creation of small learning groups with heterogeneous students. Other qualities include encouraging student autonomy and initiative; using a wide variety of materials including primary sources and raw data; using dialogue as a learning tool; encouraging student inquiry through open-ended questions; engaging students in experiences that show contradictions to initial understandings; providing time for students to construct relationships; and assessing student learning through application and open-structured tasks (Bada & Olusegun, 2015). These qualities mirror those of progressive education.

However, as Phillips (1995) argues, "as in all living religions, constructivism has many sects – each of which harbors some distrust of its rivals" (p.5). Like progressivism, constructivism takes many forms. In fact, Matthews (2000) identified eighteen different forms of educational constructivism. According to Phillips (1995) the various sects of constructivism can be described according to several epistemological dimensions or axes. The first, he describes as the continuum between constructivists who are more concerned with how the individual learner constructs knowledge in their own cognitive apparatus, and constructivists who are more concerned with the construction of human knowledge in general. Even within this umbrella, however, there are strong differences. For example, though Piaget and Vygotsky are both concerned with how individuals construct knowledge, Piaget stresses the biological and psychological mechanisms of learning, while Vygotsky emphasizes the social factors that influence learning. The second dimension he describes is the question of whether new knowledge is made or discovered, and the third is the degree to which knowledge construction is seen as an active process.

More simply, constructivism can be categorized by those who focus on psychological or individual constructivism, and those who focus on social constructivism (Bredo, 2000). While individual constructivism focuses on the processes by which individuals know, social constructivism is more concerned with the role of social interaction and mediation on individual knowing. In his finding that cognizant organisms actively construct knowledge and that knowledge does not reside in an observer-independent world, Piaget can be considered the forerunner of individual constructivism (Sharma, Anderson, Mao, Hsieh, & Xie, 2005). Within

this framework, individuals build knowledge through experiences, which in turn enable them to create action schemas or mental models. While radical constructivism (Glaserfeld, 1993) can also be considered a form of individual constructivism, it differs from the Piagetian model in that radical constructivists argue that knowledge must reside inside individuals and be constructed based on what the individual has experienced (Glaserfeld, 1995). Thus, radical constructivism rejects realism, arguing that knowledge is not an external commodity that can simply be conveyed to a knower. While radical constructivists do not reject the possibility of an objective reality, they do reject the idea that one can obtain objective knowledge. While traditional notions of reality imply that there is a world that exists outside of our experience, radical constructivists argue that “we cannot know a world prior to having experienced it” (Sharma, Anderson, Mao, Hsieh, & Xie, 2005).

In contrast to Piaget and Glaserfeld who understand constructivism largely as the stages and processes of individual knowing, social constructivists are concerned with constructivism as a *social* process of knowing. While individual constructivism focuses on the mental activities of the learner, social constructivism focuses on the cultural practices in a learner’s environment (Bereiter, 1994). Social constructivism posits that knowledge is a product of human action and that it is constructed through shared language and meaning-making activities (Gergen, 1994; Kuhn, 1970). According to Sharma et al. (2005), social constructivism is further divided into camps. On the one hand, there is the Vygotskian (1978) camp, which addresses the mediatory role of social structures and tools on individual learning. On the other hand, there are social constructivists who are more concerned with how societies come to create and validate knowledge (Bredo, 2000; Cobb, 1994; Matthews, 1997).

Within these debates, perhaps the one of most relevance is the degree to which different constructivists consider the importance of sociopolitical conditions in shaping knowledge construction. However, even social constructivists – who emphasize the ways by which individuals are always situated in and constituted by the social and cultural contexts in which they are located (Wertsch, 1991) – tend not to examine how ideology and power might influence the construction of knowledge. As Zembylas (2005) notes, in science education, research on social constructivism has tended to emphasize the social and collaborative nature of meaning making, the distribution of knowledge, the mechanisms of social learning, and the zone of proximal development (Garrison, 1997; Hodson & Hodson, 1998; Seatter, 2003; Tobin, 1993). While such attention to the social and cultural contexts of learning is significant, it has not always included a critique of ideology and power.

Some scholars have already highlighted constructivism’s limitations as it relates to questions of power. Zevenbergen (1996), for example, has critiqued constructivism for being a “liberal bourgeoisie” discourse because it fails to recognize how schooling systems only recognize particular constructions of meaning. Zevenbergen argues that students who come from social and cultural groups whose culture is not part of the dominant culture are thus at a disadvantage when entering the school system because it is only those who hold symbolic capital who are able to shape what is understood as legitimate knowledge. Similarly, Popkewitz (1998) has highlighted how constructivism typically neglects to examine the historical spaces in which knowledge is constructed, which are themselves the unacknowledged effects of power (p. 552). Thus, he argues that while constructivism may support the child in constructing personal knowledge, it also excludes the child from recognizing the social and historical mooring of that knowledge.

Such interrogations of the social contexts of learning tend also to be divorced from an examination of how *ideology*³ might influence knowledge construction. Of constructivists, feminist epistemologists have perhaps explored this question most deeply. However, feminists themselves recognize that “there are contradictions involved in claiming that...[experiences] are a source for knowledge and at the same time arguing that they are manipulated and shaped by dominant discourses” (Weiler, 1991, p. 463). This dissertation will examine this contradiction more deeply.

Moreover, though there are indeed scholars (Gutiérrez, 2011; Philip, Gupta, Elby & Turpen, 2017) who have highlighted the importance of power and ideology in the learning sciences, there is also a difference between constructivism in theory and in practice. As Hyslop-Margison and Strobel (2007) argue, many teachers and teacher educators may claim that knowledge is constructed without a full understanding of what this claim entails from an epistemological or pedagogical perspective. Cuban (1993), for example, has found that student-centered pedagogies rarely appear in pure form in classrooms, and that even when teachers draw on both student- and teacher- centered practices, teacher-centered pedagogy tends to dominate classroom life. Thus, even as constructivism has become dominant within educational literature, how constructivism looks in practice often differs from how it is conceptualized in theory – often with greater attention paid to student-centered practices, and less to the mediation of power relationships (Zevenbergen, 1996). This dissertation will examine the affordances and limitations of constructivism – as it is actualized in practice – in relationship to the development of students’ critique of larger systems of power and commitment to social justice.

Historical Background: Navigating the Paradox of Social Justice Education in Social Movement Contexts

Activists and educators have long grappled with the paradox between cultivating students’ self-directed learning and their explicit critique of oppression. These debates have historically been most heated during periods of social movement protest and rapid social change. This section will provide background context on how movement actors have understood and negotiated the tension between these two ideals in pedagogical practice. In particular, I focus on how activists within the Anarchist, Socialist, Communist, Civil Rights, and Black Power movements navigated this dilemma in their respective historical contexts.

Can progressive education serve the interests of subordinated classes and lead to a critique of society and a movement that can act on such a critique? In his book, *The Modern School Movement: Anarchism and Education in the United States*, Paul Avrigh examines this question through a narrative history of the Anarchist educational movement in the United States. Modeled on Ferrer’s Escuela Moderna in Spain, and influenced by the work of libertarian thinkers such as Bakunin, Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Froebel, Kropotkin, and Tolstoy, the Modern Schools sought to do away with the formality and discipline of the conventional classroom. According to Avrigh, Anarchists saw school as “an instrument of domination in the hands of the ruling class” (Avrigh, 1980, p.9). Thus, they sought to create their own schools “without

³ Here, I draw on Althusser’s (1971) definition of ideology as “represent[ing] the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence” (p.162). According to Althusser, ideology enables the reproduction of labor power by reproducing submission to the rules of the established social order.

subjection to any dogmatic patron'...for state and church alike sought to keep out new ideas that might undermine the status quo" (Avrich, 1980, p.8-9). Based on the idea that by "building the new society within the shell of the old'...the revolution [towards a classless society] was destined to triumph, 'first among individuals, and finally in society as a whole'" (Avrich, 1980, p.23), Anarchist schools advocated an anti-coercive and antiauthoritarian pedagogy in which the independence, autonomy, self-reliance, dignity, and rights of the child were supreme. "Freedom" also entailed freedom from the authority of the teacher, for the teacher was seen as an agent of the ruling classes, training children "to obey, to believe, to think according to the social dogmas which govern us" (Avrich, 1980, p.9). The true educator, on the other hand, was "the man who does not impose his own ideas and will on the child, but appeals to its own energies" (Avrich, 1980, p.9). Thus, Avrich found that the Modern Schools featured active methods of learning, pupil participation in decision-making, informal relations between pupils and teachers, and the cultivation of manual skills (Avrich, 1980, p.350). At the same time, however, the Modern Schools were also intended to be centers of propaganda and agitation, "a training ground for revolutionary activity" (Avrich, 1980, p. 23). As a result, Avrich notes that the Anarchist schools also subjected their students to some degree of indoctrination by preaching specific social values, including those of liberty, equality, social justice, and anti-capitalism (Avrich, 1980, p.24). In evaluating the contributions of the Modern School Movement, Avrich argues that alumni of the school did "appear to have carried away a strong cooperative and libertarian ethic, [and] a spirit of mutual aid and individual sovereignty" (Avrich, 1980, p.352). Ultimately, however, he concludes that the libertarian goals of the Anarchist schools were never fully realized, though the movement did successfully develop an alternative method of education that repudiated dogma and repression. Avrich's analysis of the Modern School Movement demonstrates how the Anarchist movement sought to reconcile child-centered pedagogies with revolutionary agendas, with more success in the former than the latter. As one Anarchist put it: "We make no claim to saving the world...We are but trying to save our own souls" (Avrich, 1980, p.353).

Kenneth Teitelbaum and William Reese examine similar questions in their article "American Socialist Pedagogy and Experimentation in the Progressive Era: The Socialist Sunday School." In this work, they document the movement to establish Socialist Sunday Schools (S.S.S.) in the United States during the early twentieth century, in response to the inequalities created by industrial capitalism. According to Teitelbaum and Reese, public schools seemed increasingly capitalist-controlled and unrepresentative of the poor, of various ethnic populations, and of organized and unorganized labor. Moreover, these groups found it difficult to gain power in local policy making bodies (Teitelbaum & Reese, 1983, p.430). In response, Socialists sought to open their own working-class controlled institutions as a means of counteracting the dominant social values promoted by the public school system, media, and church. However, according to Teitelbaum and Reese, not all Socialists supported the idea of Socialist Sunday Schools. In addition to seeing it as a poor use of resources, some Socialists believed that without systematic instruction, children would fail to develop into "good Socialists." For these Socialists, games, song singing, and picnics were merely forms of "bourgeois sentimentalism" that distracted from real class struggle (Teitelbaum & Reese, 1983, p. 436). As one Socialist educator put it:

'Some have sought to teach 'Socialism' to immature children, entirely overlooking the fact that 'Socialism' as a system of political thought presupposes a great deal of historical knowledge, and requires a thorough understanding of economics. Other schools, in an endeavor to avoid the dogmatic teaching of Socialism, have taught a watery reformism or a stupid and incorrect version of evolution and

anthropology, totally unrelated to Socialism' (Teitelbaum & Reese, 1983, p. 436). Teitelbaum and Reese argue that despite the fact that Socialists sought to inculcate children with specific socialistic values, Socialist teachers were expected to be loving, energetic and creative, rather than "dogmatically indoctrinat[ing] youth about the evils of capitalism" (Teitelbaum & Reese, 1983, p. 442). In fact, William F. Kruse, the director of the Young People's Department of the Socialist Sunday School movement, argued that the schools' purpose was to help children "to become free, clear thinkers," (Teitelbaum & Reese, 1983, p. 447) rather than learning a particular Socialist perspective. Thus, Teitelbaum and Reese's study highlights how the Socialist Sunday Schools also grappled with the contradiction between "critical thinking" as "thinking for oneself," and "critical thinking" as a means of challenging dominant ideologies, particularly those of capitalism. Ultimately, they conclude, Socialist Sunday Schools never successfully reconciled this contradiction.

In a similar vein, Paul Mishler (1999) examines how the Communist Party sought to resolve this dilemma in which a revolutionary pedagogy requires both an explicitly anti-capitalist critique, and a method that doesn't reproduce the indoctrination of bourgeois schooling. In his book *Raising Reds: The Young Pioneers, Radical Summer Camps, and Communist Political Culture in the United States*, Mishler describes how Communist families used the after-school programs and summer camps of the Young Pioneers of America (the children's organization of the Communist Party) to develop "revolutionary consciousness" within the minds of their children. Mishler argues that like the Anarchists and Socialists who preceded them, the Communists believed that schools inculcate children with conservative values and teach them to support the status quo, which is contrary to the interests of the working class (Mishler, 1999, p.24). At the same time, however, the Communists were skeptical of both Anarchist and Socialist pedagogical approaches. While they were sympathetic to the Anarchists' libertarian model, they were critical of how so few children from Anarchist schools grew up to become radicals (Mishler, 1999, p.29). They believed that

letting our children grow up without being influenced so they can later decide 'impartially' for themselves, that is impossible. The bourgeoisie shape our children's minds with the schools, radio, movies, newspapers, etc. Every day their children's organizations, like the Boy Scouts, work to turn our children against us by giving them a strike-breaking, militarist ideology (Mishler, 1999, p.30).

Thus, they saw that given individual freedom, children would be constructing knowledge from their environments, which were imbued with bourgeois, militarist ideologies. At the same time, however, Mishler notes that the Communists were equally critical of the Socialist Sunday Schools, which they believed sacrificed radical pedagogy for the sake of political indoctrination (Mishler, 1999, p.27). To the Communists, "Socialist Sunday Schools are conducted much the same as capitalist Sunday schools" (Mishler, 1999, p.27). Thus, Mishler argues that the Communists sought to find a middle ground, generally being more sympathetic to the Anarchist model, while still maintaining some sort of conscious political direction. They did this by integrating the Communist children's groups into local party organizations. Instead of simply indoctrinating children with Communist values, the Communists prepared children for future participation in class struggle by "leading the child in the class struggle now!" (Mishler, 1999, p.31). In this way, Mishler finds that the Communist children's organizations were more than just educational institutions – they were political organizations. During the 1920s and 1930s, the Young Pioneers struggled for the abolishment of child labor, the development of playgrounds for city children, and the distribution of free school lunches (Mishler, 1999, p.31). At the same time,

the Communists also maintained their commitment to a child-centered education by having children chair their own meetings, elect their own officers, and lead their own activities (Mishler, 1999, p.44). Thus, for Mishler, the Communist project demonstrates one way by which radicals bridged the contradiction between constructivist pedagogies and explicit political ideology.

Yet, the pedagogical dilemma faced by Anarchists, Socialists, and Communists has proved to be historically enduring. In his article, “Minds Stayed on Freedom: Politics and Pedagogy in the African American Freedom Struggle,” Daniel Perlstein argues that Black⁴ educators and activists have long been concerned with the paradox between the democratic claims of progressive education and the need for an ideological critique that would lead to Black liberation. Through his study of the pedagogical practices of the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements, Perlstein notes that there have been times when Black scholars and educators have gambled on the democratic potential of progressive education for overcoming the brutalizing impacts of racial exclusion and oppression. For example, Perlstein describes the Mississippi freedom schools founded by Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) activists where students were ““train[ed]...to be active agents in bringing about social change”” (Perlstein, 2002, p.254) by constructing meaning from their own experiences.

However, this belief in students’ ability to make sense of their world was dependent on SNCC’s faith that ““American society was not irretrievably alien to Black youth”” (Perlstein, 2002, p.253). As this faith dissipated throughout the Civil Rights Movement, and it became increasingly clear that ““America was hopelessly racist”” (Perlstein, 2002, p.255), the pedagogical approaches of African American activists became more and more didactic. Initially, SNCC activists believed that ““the system would work, the system would listen”” (Perlstein, 2002, p.256). However, after they ““played by the rules...[and] arrived at the doorstep and found the door slammed in our face”” (Perlstein, 2002, p.256), African American activists concluded that open-ended questioning was not sufficiently militant for dismantling racial oppression.

As a result, Perlstein argues that the transmission of information became more important than students’ exploration of their own experiences. According to SNCC veteran Mike Thelwell, African American activists in the Black Panther Party began to focus on ““the rehabilitation of...a culture and heritage they have been taught to despise...[in order to] build Black consciousness”” (Perlstein, 2002, p.258). The Panthers believed that ““banking” education or “direct instruction” was necessary in order for Black students to understand their “real” needs, desires, and identities. Thus, the Black Panthers argued that ““Black people and other poor and oppressed people must begin to seek an education...that will show them how those in power wage outright war against us”” (Perlstein, 2002, p.262). Perlstein concludes that ““the evolution of movement schooling demonstrates that no single pedagogical approach inherently serves the cause of social justice”” (Perlstein, 2002, p.269). For Perlstein, the issue is not whether or not progressive education is “appropriate” for low-income students or students of color. The problem is that in encouraging students to “be free” and “learn from their environments,” educators often forget that students are drawing from an environment imbued with the legacies of racism, colonialism, and oppression.

Thus, scholarship on the Anarchist, Socialist, Communist, Civil Rights, and Black Power movements demonstrate how educators and movement actors have long been concerned with the

⁴ Following other scholars (Dumas, 2016; Okun, 2010), I follow the lead of the historically Black press to capitalize “Black” (unless it is a direct quote from another publication). As Dumas (2016) argues, “Black” denotes Black self-determination. I do not capitalize “white” to denote its meaning as a social construction (unless I am specifically using it in reference to an identity).

relationship between constructivist pedagogy and ideological critique. In particular, activists in each of these movements sought to develop a pedagogical model that differed from and challenged the top-down indoctrination of the bourgeois / white supremacist State. At the same time, studies on these movements illustrate how activists continue to face and have difficulty resolving an enduring dilemma: while constructivist approaches to learning may encourage students' self-directed thinking, they may not sufficiently illuminate the structuring of the dominant social order.

Chapter 2

Theoretical Framework

Race and the History of Progressive Education

In emphasizing democratic values and constructivist learning, social justice education draws from a long tradition of progressive education. As a result, it is also marked by many of the contradictions that have marked progressive education since Dewey's time. In particular, progressive educators have long espoused democratic values while simultaneously – and perhaps unintentionally – upholding racial proscription. This chapter will illuminate some of the contradictions faced by educators in practicing social justice education by interrogating the history of progressive education itself and how it has historically addressed questions of race and racial inequality. Specifically, this chapter will review literature examining the educational philosophies of John Dewey and Booker T. Washington. As the best-known theorist of progressive education, Dewey has had a mixed track record for advancing racial equity, ultimately prioritizing social harmony over racial uplift (Goodenow, 1977). Similarly, though Booker T. Washington's Tuskegee model was both progressive and explicitly sought racial uplift, it was also used to uphold colonialism, white supremacy, capitalism, and heteropatriarchy. In examining the educational philosophies of these two thinkers, this chapter illuminates the contradictions between progressive education and social justice education's anti-racist ideals.

“Progressive” Education and “Black” Education in Conflict?

According to educational historian Jeffrey Aaron Snyder, “progressive education has been effectively coded as a white movement” (Snyder, 2015, p.276). This has occurred despite the fact that many Black educators viewed progressive education as a promising avenue to democratic social change, and demonstrated a widespread and sustained interest in progressivism (Goodenow, 1975; Goodenow, 1978).

There is an increasing body of literature by historians documenting this tension between a “white-coded” “progressive” education and “Black” education. In his article “The Progressive Educator, Race, and Ethnicity in the Depression Years: An Overview,” Ronald Goodenow makes the argument that social reformists within the progressive education movement were cognizant of the problems with racial discrimination, seeing it as an “unhealthy” form of ethnic expression. While some, like John Dewey and George Counts, saw racism and ethnic conflict as the product of social-structural and institutional problems within American life, others, like William Kilpatrick and Harold Rugg, emphasized the cultural and psychological components of racial prejudice. It was this second, more conservative camp that eventually gained dominance – as a result, progressives focused on the building of cultural pluralism, “communication,” “understanding,” and “awareness,” rather than racial discrimination or Jim Crow-enforced segregation (Goodenow, 1975, p. 366). Goodenow argues that it was progressives' faith in social engineering and rational planning that led them to downplay social change that would disrupt the social order. Instead, for African Americans, they advocated tolerance for authority and self-control in order to prepare them for a life of menial jobs (Goodenow, 1975, p.378).

Michael James makes a similar analysis in his article “Southern Progressivism during the Great Depression: Virginia and African-American Social Reconstruction.” In this work, James argues that the ideals of social reconstruction – with its themes of radical community changes being initiated by a vanguard of teachers liberating the masses – was never intended for African Americans. In fact, he claims that in reality, the notion of progressive community rebuilding served more as a “conservator of the status quo than a mechanism for radical democratic change” (James, 1995, p.115). Using a localized case study, James demonstrates how Virginia created one of the most far-reaching and radical statewide revision programs in education, using a language of school reform that was democratic, participatory, liberating, cooperative, and reconstructive (James, 1995, p.119). It soon became clear, however, that these social reconstructionist ideals occurred only in theory – James found no evidence of white schools using the revision program to remake their communities. Moreover, it also became clear that the project was never intended to democratically reconstruct the inequities in Southern society. When D.W. Peters, Director of Instruction at the State Department, asked President John Gandy of Virginia State College to recommend a committee to oversee the design of school-based materials, it was evident that whites envisioned a different curriculum for African American children (James, 1995, p.123). Notably, however, James did find that despite the accommodationist intentions of the social reconstructionists, it was during this time period that African American educators in Virginia made their greatest gains in the struggle against inequality and segregation (James, 1995, p.115). Black educators like Doxey Wilkerson, who was also a Communist Party activist, used the language of social reconstructionism to remake their communities, developing a curriculum that might be termed “Afrocentric” today, and having them incorporated in teacher-designed units for use throughout the state. By the end of the decade, these Black educators had contributed to a reconstructed definition of civil rights, and carved for themselves a tenuous foothold in state educational policymaking. Ironically, James notes that “the work of countless black teachers did more to turn progressive theory into practice than did progressive white educators anywhere in the South” (James, 1995, p.129).

In his book *Lessons in Progress*, Michael Dennis further argues that it was state university administrators and faculty members who were actually at the forefront of social reform in the New South. Distinguishing themselves from racial extremists, these progressive educators espoused a form of racial discrimination that was palatable to middle-class southerners. As educational experts, they used their intellectual legitimacy to design a system of instruction that would maintain Black subservience by promoting Black industrial education. In fact, Dennis argues that “the history of higher education in the South is inextricable from the crystallization of the ‘highest stage of white supremacy’” (Dennis, 2001, p.43). Progressives were convinced that segregation and Black proscription were necessary to guarantee social order, economic progress, and white supremacy. Thus, they portrayed Black disfranchisement as an accomplishment in social engineering, “settling” on white political control and social separation in lieu of extralegal violence. This fit in perfectly with the progressive agenda, which relied on scientific rationalism to sponsor moderate change through discrete adjustments to the social order that would allow for economic growth and racial harmony. Moreover, for these progressives, education was the key to racial accommodation. The proper curriculum would equip African Americans with the rudimentary skills needed by the new economic order, and prepare them to assume a subservient but productive place in southern society. Thus, progressives advocated a system of education that mirrored the “education” African Americans “received” under slavery; in the same way that slavery taught “the virtues of order, fidelity,

temperance, and obedience” (Dennis, 2001, p.51), so too would industrial education. As Dennis puts it, progressives were “no less committed to Black subordination than their extremist adversaries.” However, these racial accommodationists “considered education rather than repression a more effective method for accomplishing the same objective” (Dennis, 2001, p.47).

In analyzing the relationship between progressive education and race, it becomes clear that progressives rarely considered racial equality central to their social reformist agenda. Though historians have disagreed on the degree to which this was intentional – with some arguing that conservative forces within the progressive movement gained primacy over more liberal ones, and others arguing that progressivism was simply a more “palatable” way to uphold white supremacy – it is clear that progressive education has had a tense and contradictory relationship to the Black freedom struggle. Though progressive education is extolled for its democratic values, the history of progressive education demonstrates that the enactment of these values has always been partial, and often served to uphold racial exclusion instead.

Deweyan Progressivism and Race

At the same time, however, it would be unfair to say that all progressives were uniformly and intentionally racist in their educational agendas, in the same way that it would be unfair to say that all progressives were white. In order to better understand the relationship between progressive education and race, historians have carefully examined the educational philosophies of John Dewey, perhaps the best-known leader of progressive education, but who also had a mixed track record on issues related to racial equity, and Booker T. Washington, whose use of industrial education to uplift African Americans was also critiqued for its racial accommodationism.

In examining the relationship between race and progressive education, historians have disagreed on the extent to which Dewey can be considered an advocate of racial equity or a racial accommodationist. Those who are more forgiving of Dewey, like Michael Eldridge, argue that though Dewey did not explicitly write much about race, his approach to social change was broader than the deliberative-experimental-educational model that is typically ascribed to him, and can be useful for building a multicultural society. Reviewing some of Dewey’s “less-than-admirable” comments on race, Eldridge claims that after looking through two decades of Dewey’s correspondence, he found one time when Dewey used the phrase ““nigger in the woodpile”” and a time when his adopted son Sabino referred to his employment as a ““white man’s job”” (Eldridge, 2004, p.12). For Eldridge, however, these comments were only “casually racist” and “reflective of pre-1960s white America” (Eldridge, 2004, p.12). At the same time, Dewey advocated on behalf of African Americans at various moments, most notably in the case of Odell Waller, an African American sharecropper who was convicted of killing his white landlord despite pleading self-defense. In his correspondence and published work, Dewey also indicated his opposition to lynchings and cited racism as a problem. Further, Eldridge notes that Dewey did not see race as a biological fact, so much as a culturally conditioned term, and recognized the relationship between the political economy and racial prejudice. At the same time, however, he concedes that “we still must judge Dewey to have been not sufficiently alert to ‘the virulence of racial prejudice’” (Eldridge, 2004, p.15). Despite these shortcomings, Eldridge argues that Dewey’s pragmatism can still be useful for approaching social change, even around

issues of race. Because Dewey saw racial prejudice as an acquired social characteristic rather than a biological fact, he also believed that it could be addressed in practical ways.

Similarly, in her article “(Re)construction Zone: Beware of Falling Statues,” Shannon Sullivan argues that though Dewey rarely examines race in a detailed fashion and was implicitly racist, his work still contains useful resources for understanding race and racism. According to Sullivan, Dewey’s neglect of race was not merely an oversight in his work. Rather, it demonstrates the ways by which Dewey theorized solely from a white perspective and thus perpetuated the hegemony of white ontology, ethics, epistemology, social and political theory, aesthetics, habit, and experience (Sullivan, 2003, p.111). In uncovering the role that racist habits of thought played in Dewey’s ideas, Sullivan argues that Dewey believed that individuals needed to “escape from the limitations of the social group in which he was born” (Sullivan, 2003, p.116), and the way to do that was through assimilation. However, Sullivan notes that Dewey did not use the term “assimilation” in the sense of a melting pot in which all racial and other differences blend into uniformity. Rather, he called for a “building of shared interests and common ground that bridges differences and diversity” (Sullivan, 2003, p.116). The real problem, however, was that Dewey assumed that American public schools were exemplars of such interactions when in 1916 they most certainly were not, and nor had they ever been. Thus, Sullivan argues that Dewey’s call for assimilation “must be interpreted as an implicitly (although undoubtedly unintentionally) racist call for nonwhite students to embody white ways of being” (Sullivan, 2003, p.117). Dewey further privileges whiteness in his account of education as a civilizing process. According to Dewey, the “primitive” social life of savages results in “low-grade intelligence and perhaps defective moral sense” (Sullivan, 2003, p.119). Sullivan argues that though Dewey never used the word “race” in connection with the term “savage,” his discussion of “savage” was racially coded, for the term was commonly understood to represent “the wild, dark non-European, in contrast with the civilized, white European” (Sullivan, 2003, p.119). Sullivan thus concludes that Dewey’s lack of attention to race in a racist world was problematic because it allowed racism to flourish. However, Sullivan further argues that the Deweyan concept of “habit” can still be helpful for thinking about race today. According to Dewey, “habits” are that which constitute the self. In a raced and racist world, the self would thus necessarily be racially constituted. For Sullivan, this understanding of race as ontological illuminates how attempts to change racist institutional and personal habits are likely to be ineffective unless they address the particular forms of habit that racism produces and the particular environments that encourage and discourage racism. Sullivan concludes that rather than invoking a “neutral” understanding of pluralism, democracy, and inclusion, Deweyan educators today should use his conception of habit to acknowledge the racialized nature of educational space and the racially constituted habits of communication in the classroom that may contribute to unequal distributions of power.

In the same vein, Stefan Neubert argues that Dewey’s concept of democracy can continue to provide relevant and vital resources for present-day discussions around multicultural education. In analyzing Dewey’s philosophical naturalism, Neubert claims that Dewey never indulged in reductionist approaches to “naturalizing” human culture or reducing culturally constructed identities to fixed essences (Neubert, 2010, p.491). Rather, in *Human Nature and Conduct* (1922), Dewey emphasized the primacy of culture in understanding human behavior. It is from this perspective that Neubert claims that Dewey rejected arguments that sought to explain cultural differences on the grounds of biological heredity. Neubert further argues that Dewey made real efforts to address institutional racism in the case of Odell Waller and denounced the

racist history of the legal system, which was notorious for its poll tax regulations that created exclusively white juries. Though Neubert acknowledges Dewey's shortcomings in failing to explicitly address race in his writings, he concludes by arguing that Dewey's pragmatism could be reconstructed to create a more democratic future, and that it is in fact this process of reconstruction that is central to democracy.

Also focusing on the Odell Waller case in his article "John Dewey and the Question of Race: The Fight for Odell Waller," Sam Stack argues that Dewey's lack of writing on race does not show a lack of interest in the problem, so much as a different conceptualization of it. Stack claims that Dewey has had a fairly strong anti-racist background, having experienced racism "first-hand" after being forbidden by his landlord to hold integrated National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) meetings at his house. Stack argues that Dewey's trip to China in 1919 further exposed him to racism, as he became concerned by Japan's aggressive foreign policy, and the ways by which Japan was using racial discrimination to secure power and influence over China. Before the Chinese Social and Political Science Association, Dewey wrote *Race Prejudice and Friction*, one of his broadest statements on race. In this paper, Dewey argued that racial prejudice was not the cause of racial friction, but was a product of "political organization and habits and national rivalries undergirded by economic and industrial differences" (Stack, 2009, p.21). For Stack, however, it was Dewey's emphasis on political and economic forces that actually prevented him from seeing how the power of tradition, culture, and color were deeply embedded in the social world and manifested in racism. According to Stack, Dewey's efforts to get rid of the poll tax and give African Americans the right to vote was not sufficient for overcoming centuries of racism in the South and in American society. Rather, for Stack, it was the Civil Rights Movement and its attention to social, moral, and religious precepts that was finally able to put a dent in southern racism. Thus, though Stack sees Dewey's intervention in the Odell Waller case as a sign of his anti-racist orientation, he argues that Dewey does not go far enough in addressing the cultural mores that reinforce racism. Nevertheless, Stack still sees hope in Dewey's pragmatism for providing a useful framework for reflecting upon, questioning, and examining the causes and manifestations of racism.

Ronald Goodenow takes almost the exact opposite view in his essay "Racial and Ethnic Tolerance in John Dewey's Educational and Social Thought: The Depression Years." In this work, Goodenow argues that in 1922, Dewey believed it was economics that maintained racism as a "social disease." Though educative concepts such as "understanding," "communication," and "tolerance" could eliminate many sources of friction, Dewey understood that "without political and economic changes these factors will not go far in solving the problem" (Goodenow, 1977, p. 50). Instead of advocating rapid social and political change, however, Dewey believed that African Americans and immigrants needed to be patient until larger changes in political and industrial organization occurred. Thus, he supported immigration restriction as a means for giving the world "rest and recuperation" from racial conflict (Goodenow, 1977, p.51). Moreover, by 1940, Dewey's public statements on race shifted such that he began to deemphasize the social and economic causes of racism, and stress instead the power of democratic ideology to create national consensus. This shift in Dewey's thinking reflected larger shifts in the progressive education movement, which, influenced by child-centered educators, increasingly stressed the psychological basis for tolerance as a social curative. Perhaps disillusioned with political processes during the Great Depression, Dewey even argued that legal matters and forms of institutional democracy were of little significance beyond whatever value they had on paper. Rather, he claimed that democracy must be realized in

informal relations that are free and open before they can be institutionalized politically. Dewey further went on to argue that much of the responsibility for keeping democracy alive should be cultivated in schools through human relations programs and intercultural education. Such education, however, should be apolitical because this would allow the school to anticipate and direct future social change towards consensus rather than political conflict. However, in advocating such an apolitical perspective on democracy, Goodenow argues that Dewey contributed to a non-sociological view of segregation and discrimination, which implicitly supported existing social structures and institutions. In assuming that justice could be obtained through the development of tolerance and apolitical democratic consensus, “the progressive’s view of progress thereby diminished a need for oppressed people to have political power” (Goodenow, 1977, p.57). Thus, in contrast to Stack, Goodenow sees Dewey’s shift away from a political and economic analysis of racism towards one that emphasized cultural pluralism and psychological attitudes as a step backwards in realizing his democratic ideals.

Frank Margonis takes an even more critical perspective on Dewey in his article “John Dewey’s Racialized Visions of the Student and Classroom Community.” In this work, Margonis argues that Dewey’s support for P.S.26 in Indianapolis, which provided a remedial and segregated education for African Americans, points to deeper racial assumptions that underlay Dewey’s educational philosophy. At P.S. 26, African American students were trained only for the jobs that whites wanted them to do – girls learned to do domestic work, while boys learned carpentry, cooking, tailoring, and shoemaking – skills that would adapt these students to the existing racial order. For Margonis, however, Dewey’s support for P.S.26 did not simply represent a compromise in his democratic principles. This is because Dewey may have believed that European Americans and African Americans were at different stages of evolutionary development and thus needed different types of education (Margonis, 2009, p.20). Positioning African Americans somewhere in the early 1800s on the evolutionary timeline, Dewey assumed that Black students needed to learn “habits of thrift and economy” and “higher standards of living” before they would be ready for full citizenship rights (Margonis, 2009, p. 25). Thus, Margonis argues that Dewey, like Booker T. Washington, envisioned a process of social change by which African Americans needed to first develop their abilities and earn the respect of white society before the social differences that divided Blacks and whites would come to be accepted as mere cultural differences (Margonis, 2009, p. 26). Moreover, according to Margonis, Dewey considered racism to be the characteristic of superstitious, prescientific mindsets. Because he believed that prejudice is a natural phenomenon rooted in an instinctual aversion people have to others who are different from them, Dewey never publicly advocated equal rights for African Americans or supported integration. Margonis concludes by arguing that though Dewey presented the themes of progressive education as though they were relevant for all children, his vision of the “universal” child was actually based on white European American norms. In emphasizing the Emersonian ideal of freeing oneself from the influences of traditional pedagogies, Dewey’s vision of child-centered education stood at odds with the values of Indigenous and African American students (Margonis, 2009).

Thomas Fallace takes a more nuanced perspective on Dewey in his book *Dewey and the Dilemma of Race: An Intellectual History 1895-1922*. In this work, Fallace argues that Dewey’s analysis of race shifted significantly after 1916. Prior to 1916, Dewey, like most of his contemporaries, subscribed to an ethnocentric theory that assumed that the psychological development of the child aligned with the historical development of humanity. Though Dewey did not believe in the inherent biological inferiority of any racial group, his historicist approach

to knowledge conceived of culture in ways that pointed to Western civilization as the endpoint of all human progress, and other cultures as “savage” in relation to this endpoint. Using the term “savage” liberally throughout his writings, Dewey conceptualized the “savage” as the antithesis of all things “democratic” or “scientific,” terms that Dewey used to refer to the civilized world. For Dewey, “savages” were not merely different, but represented a less developed form of living, having more in common with children than with the civilized man.

Thus, Fallace argues that ethnocentrism was built right into Dewey’s early pedagogy and philosophy, and it was this philosophy that informed both his curriculum in the Dewey School at the University of Chicago and his praise for P.S. 26. Fallace claims that Dewey’s acclamation of P.S. 26 as a “step forward” in solving the “race question” despite being a racially segregated school, is actually consistent with his broader philosophical inclinations towards linear historicism and genetic psychology. For Dewey, education had to take place in a particular linear sequence that allowed students to subordinate their environment. Thus, if the environment of the student is deficient, they can only go so far because students need a more advanced culture in order to stimulate further development. From this perspective, the students of P.S.26 could only “repeat the race experience” up to the present time; since their present was “developmentally deficient,” they could go no further (Fallace, 2011, p.84).

However, Fallace goes on to argue that as culture epoch theory fell out of fashion, and as Dewey himself interacted more with non-Western societies through his visits to China, Japan, and Turkey, Dewey eventually reconstructed his view of culture and race towards a more interactionalist and pluralist orientation. Even so, however, Fallace notes that Dewey’s travels challenged, but did not completely overturn his linear historicism. Though he no longer believed that “higher” cultures were inherently better than those of the “past,” he still thought that Western culture better met the needs of its own context and conditions than other cultures. Moreover, rather than seeing racism as a symptom of social and economic conditions, Dewey attributed “racial intolerance” to a broader “spirit of suspicion and fear” that was gripping the nation (Fallace, 2011, p.159). Thus, Fallace argues that though Dewey reconstructed his own views on evolution, culture, and education, his newer ideas – including pluralism and interaction – did not replace the older ones of ethnocentrism, genetic psychology, and linear historicism. Instead, they coexisted and were brought to the fore depending on the particular problems and contexts of the day. Fallace then goes on to critique the view that the shortcomings of Dewey’s earlier works were corrected by his later interactional-pluralist views, by arguing that Dewey never explicitly denounced his earlier writings on education and continued to defend the linear historicist curriculum he developed at the University of Chicago. At the same time, however, Fallace argues that it is equally unfair to only emphasize Dewey’s pre- or post-1916 works, (as he claims Shannon Sullivan and Frank Margonis have done), because doing so depreciates the evolution of Dewey’s ideas. Fallace concludes by noting that by taking Dewey’s ideas out of the context that engendered them, and applying them to current educational problems, issues, and agendas, present-day educators contradict the spirit of Dewey’s work, which has always emphasized the contextual nature of knowledge.

From this analysis, it is clear that Dewey – arguably the most iconic figure within progressive education – had a mixed track record on issues of race and racial equity. Relative to his contemporaries, Dewey did have a more progressive understanding of race, seeing it as a culturally conditioned term, rather than a biological fact. Dewey also acknowledged the relationship between race and inequities within larger politico-economic systems. At times, he even advocated on behalf of African Americans, most notably in his position as a founding

member of the NAACP, and in the case of Odell Waller. At the same time, however, Dewey never publicly opposed lynching, one of the most brutal forms of racism faced by African Americans at the time, and even supported immigration restriction as a means to slow down social or political turmoil in the face of racial conflict.

The heart of the debate, however, lies in the question of whether Dewey's mixed track record on issues of race and racial equity fundamentally impacted his theory of progressive education. Some historians, like Michael Eldridge, Shannon Sullivan, and Stefan Neubart, argue that despite his shortcomings with regard to racial issues, Dewey's overall theory of pragmatism, democracy, and progressive education are still useful for helping us think about how to create democratic classrooms in a multiracial world. Others, like Frank Margonis and Thomas Fallace are more critical. For Margonis, any pedagogy rooted in a theory of the self is "inescapably biased toward particular ways of being, that is, in favor of those students whose culture and circumstances best approximates that of the theoretically posited self" (Margonis, 2009, p. 37). For Dewey, this ideal student was the "creative" Emersonian self, one who was both white and middle-class – hence, Dewey's "unintentional" denigration of non-white students. Similarly, Margonis critiques Dewey's theory of community for assuming an "intersubjective space where students and the teacher tacitly agree upon informal communicative norms that will govern the social relations of the classroom" (Margonis, 2009, p. 38). Such communities make it easy for educators to exclude students who do not already share their values, and simultaneously lead educators to discipline students into accepting the norms of the community. Still, however, Margonis claims that "we should seek to maintain Dewey's pedagogical advances – which celebrate the creative abilities of youth – while abandoning the exclusionary aspects of his pedagogy" (Margonis, 2009, p. 37). In making this statement, Margonis, like Eldridge, Sullivan, and Neubart, implies that there are indeed aspects of Dewey's educational philosophy that are redeemable – Dewey's racialized understanding of the student has not tainted Deweyan progressivism as a whole.

Fallace, however, makes a more radical critique of Dewey. He argues that ethnocentrism was built right into Dewey's pedagogy and philosophy and that it was this philosophy that informed Dewey's future work in education. Though Dewey moved to a more pluralist position over time, he never revoked his ideas around genetic psychology and linear historicism which existed in conjunction with – and no doubt influenced – his ideas around progressive education. It was Dewey's historicist approach to knowledge that led him to praise the segregated, second-class education at P.S. 26 as "progressive" for African Americans. Because Dewey saw Western civilization as the endpoint of all human progress, and other cultures as "savage" in relation to this endpoint, it made sense to him for African Americans to receive a "deficient" education given their "deficient" environment and culture.

Given that Dewey's theory of progressive education evolved in tandem with his racist ideas around genetic psychology and linear historicism, the question remains – is progressivism compatible with anti-racist or social justice education? In considering the tenets of progressive education – democratic learning, child-centered education, critical thinking, and learning by doing – critical educators today would likely agree that none of these principles are inherently racist, and all are desirable. At the same time, historians have documented the ways by which these principles have been used to uphold white supremacy and delay radical social change. It thus becomes evident that any pedagogical tool can be used for either liberatory or accommodationist purposes. While Dewey and other white educators limited the democratic potential of progressive education to just white students, and used progressivism as a tool for

upholding white supremacy, Black educators like Doxey Wilkerson, Alain Locke, W.A. Robinson, and Reid Jackson saw the potential of progressive education for racial uplift and used it to advance the Black agenda (Goodenow, 1975). As with any tool, the potential of progressive education to meet social justice aims depends on its political purpose and how it is utilized.

Booker T. Washington and Progressive Education

The relationship between race and progressive education can be further complicated through an examination of Booker T. Washington's educational philosophy. Despite developing a theory of education comparable to Dewey's, Washington is rarely included in the historiography of progressive education and is instead discussed as a "Black educator." One notable distinction between Washington and Dewey is that Washington explicitly saw the purpose of his educational model as a means for uplifting his race. Yet, his work has also been critiqued by other Black intellectuals for its "attitude of adjustment and submission" (Du Bois, 1903, p.38) and its "accept[ance] [of] the alleged inferiority of the Negro races" (Du Bois, 1903, p.39). As with Dewey, however, historians have disagreed on the degree to which Washington's progressivism can be considered a form of racial accommodationism, or simply a pragmatic means of uplifting his race.

It is only in recent years that historians have sought to situate Washington within the pragmatist and progressive tradition, which, as Snyder has argued, has had a largely white-coded historiography. In his article "Booker T. Washington and Progressive Education: An Experimentalist Approach to Curriculum Development and Reform," Donald Generals claims that despite being ignored by the historiography, Booker T. Washington's educational philosophy and practices were formulated before Dewey's, and may have even influenced nascent theories of progressive education. Generals argues that like Dewey, Washington believed that the personal experiences of the student should serve as the basis of their educational experiences and that this was precisely the curriculum that was implemented at Tuskegee. Moreover, like Dewey, Washington drew on the ideas of Heinrich Pestalozzi and Friedrich Froebel, who believed that education must have its roots in the objects and activities of social living and that this was the means for building a democratic society. Notably, Generals uses the claim that Washington was a progressive in order to refute the view that Tuskegee was "designed to subjugate Blacks to social and economic deprivation" (Generals, 2000, p.219). According to Generals, progressive education was designed and practiced to address the class disparities in a democratic society, and Washington did this by including economic and social interaction, moral and ethical engagement, communication, and good home living – the "essentials for democratic living" – in his curriculum (Generals, 2000, p.222). In addition to being a progressive, Generals further argues that Washington was a pragmatist who believed that human intelligence is developed through natural interaction with the surrounding environment. From this perspective, Generals claims that Washington's call for African Americans to "cast down your buckets" was actually a call for African Americans to solve the problems of their immediate environment; by making the environment work for them, African Americans would have a greater chance for prosperity. Generals even defends Washington's emphasis on good habits of hygiene, arguing that such practices are "basic to effective living and learning" (Generals, 2000, p. 230). For Generals, Washington's contributions to progressive education should be acknowledged as a pragmatic strategy for uplifting the race.

Also in defense of Washington, Bill Lawson (2004) argues that Washington was indeed a pragmatist, and that his pragmatism was one of action, rooted in the social context of the moment, but also coupled with a larger social agenda. In fact, Lawson claims that Washington's pragmatism was based in the philosophical tradition of John Dewey. His approach to resolving racial issues mirrored the basic elements of pragmatism, which involves finding solutions to basic life problems (Lawson, 2004, p.126). Lawson cites Washington's efforts to bring Blacks and whites together in order to resolve racial discord, as well as his "Atlantic Compromise" speech as examples of "doing whatever it takes" to solve a problem. Moreover, for Lawson, Washington's pragmatism was a social and political pragmatism that was rooted in a desire to change the legal and social practices that degraded African Americans. Lawson claims that Washington was cognizant of the social conditions that needed to be addressed in order to deal with race relations, and he did this by being a "playa," in order to garner white support and funds to maintain his vision of educational and racial uplift. In fact, citing Harold Cruse, Lawson argues that Washington's pragmatic attitude can even be considered a forerunner to the economic and political philosophy of the 1960s Black Power Movement.

Though Ronald Chennault also argues that Washington was a progressive and a pragmatist, he draws very different conclusions from General and Lawson in his analysis of Washington's legacy. In his article "Pragmatism and Progressivism in the Educational Thought and Practices of Booker T. Washington," Chennault also identifies Washington as a pragmatist and uses Lawson's definition of a pragmatist as one who "solv[es] basic life problems" (Chennault, 2013, p.123) to argue that one can consider Washington a creative, though flawed leader, who used industrial education as one feasible plan of action given the social situation of the time. Citing Lawson, Chennault further notes that Washington's belief in the need to change white attitudes via Black progress was a pragmatist approach to addressing the hostile environment in which he lived. In other words, Washington was no "mere puppet" (Chennault, 2013, p.123). At the same time, like General, Chennault argues that Washington was also a progressive. Citing Wilson Jeremiah Moses, Chennault notes that Washington's philosophy was undergirded by a social Darwinist yet reformist sentiment much like Theodore Roosevelt's progressivism. Unlike General, however, Chennault argues that "such a reconsideration [of Washington] does not equate to an attempt to rehabilitate Washington's image or to rescue it from critique" (Chennault, 2013, p. 130). This is because Washington's solutions had a very narrow base of application. In addition to restricting Black people's potential for broad success, Chennault argues that Washington's self-help model of industrial education likely delayed Black people's fight for equal rights and stifled the emergence of new ideas. Chennault even notes that Washington's naiveté in assuming that enfranchisement could be achieved through the channel of American capitalism made him akin to becoming an oppressor within other sociopolitical projects, in the way that Fanon suggests oppressed people are sometimes likely to become (Chennault, 2013, p.130).

Anderson paints precisely such a picture in his historical account, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935*. According to Anderson, Washington's Tuskegee program was undergirded by a social philosophy of interracial harmony predicated on political disfranchisement, civil inequality, racial segregation, and the training of Black youth for racially prescribed economic positions. Tuskegee mirrored Washington's mentor's Samuel Armstrong's Hampton Institute, which was designed to reverse the gains made by ex-slaves to promote literacy skills and citizenship training in the Black community. Instead, Armstrong sought to design a curriculum that would adapt Black education to the needs and interests of the South's

dominant-class whites. This manifested in the “Hampton-Tuskegee Idea,” which essentially called for the removal of Black voters and politicians from southern political life, the relegation of Black workers to the lowest forms of labor in the southern economy, and the establishment of a southern racial hierarchy. According to Anderson, the primary aim of both Hampton and Tuskegee was to train teachers to embody, accept, and preach an ethic of hard work, the “dignity of labor,” and Christian morality (Anderson, 1988, p.34). Principal Frissell of the Hampton Institute even maintained that slavery had been a “civilizing” influence on the “barbarous Negroes” and that Hampton’s model of industrial education would complete the “education” that was begun under slavery (Anderson, 1988, p.84). Thus, Hampton’s theme, “education for life,” actually meant the training of African Americans to adjust to the life that had been carved out for them within an oppressive social order. To prevent racial strife, Washington, like Armstrong, discouraged African Americans from voting, running for political office, or pursuing civic equality. Anderson concludes that it is for these reasons that Washington became indispensable to northern philanthropists in their efforts to obtain the support of Black intellectuals and leaders.

Though Louis Harlan advocated a more complex understanding of Washington in his biography of the Black leader, he too takes a more critical perspective in his article “Booker T. Washington and the White Man’s Burden.” In this work, Harlan argues that Washington’s cooperation with white colonial authorities in Africa was consistent with his public acceptance of most southern white racial practices and his partnership with white elites in the American North and South. Harlan claims that though Washington occasionally endorsed surreptitious attacks on the prevailing racial system, his experience in Africa demonstrates his essential conservatism. In fact, Washington so thoroughly subscribed to the ideology of the “White Man’s Burden,” that he took up the burden himself, even endorsing the white stereotype of the naked African savage in a 1897 lecture. It is through this worldview that Washington became involved in colonial projects in Togo, Sudan, South Africa, the Congo Free State, and Liberia. In each of these projects, Harlan found evidence of Washington’s commitment to a “civilizing” mission in Africa. For example, in Sudan, Washington warned his students against “going native,” and in South Africa, colonial officials sought Washington’s help in identifying the best methods “to raise, educate, and civilize the black man” (Harlan, 1966, p.448). Though Washington spoke out about forced labor and police brutality and played a more congenial role in the Congo, his actions in Liberia ultimately supported a semicolonial relationship between Liberia and the United States. Harlan notes that one curious anomaly within Washington’s work in Africa was his friendly correspondence with many leaders of African nationalism. Harlan argues, however, that “there is no evidence...that he encouraged or even understood their nationalistic and Pan-African views” (Harlan, 1966, p.460). Rather, African nationalists seemed to have been taken by Washington’s separatist inclinations, which, while conservative in the American context, became radical nationalism in the African context. Ultimately, Harlan concludes that Washington remained a social pacifist for whom industrial education was a universal panacea.

Manning Marable takes a similar perspective in his article “Booker T. Washington and African Nationalism.” In this work, Marable describes Washington as a “pro-capitalist” and “pro-colonialist” who significantly influenced the struggle for both Black capitalism and Black power. According to Marable, Washington thought that the “uncivilized Negro” of Africa needed to improve himself and his society through individual initiative and the acceptance of Western religion and cosmology. Moreover, he believed that Africans needed the guidance of Black Americans in order to do so – Africans needed to be taught the principles of a “higher moral life” which involved learning to raise “better sheep” and creating superior cotton cultivation methods

(Marable, 1974, p.399). However, Marable argues that though Washington's commercial schemes in Togo all worked exclusively with German colonial interests, and Washington did not personally invest much of his time or capital in assisting Black Africa, many South African Black leaders, experiencing a form of institutional racism similar to that in the American South, still looked to Tuskegee for advice and support. As a result, many African Black nationalist leaders adopted Washington's anti-labor, pro-capitalist platform. For example, like Washington, John Langalibalele Dube, first President of the South African Native National Congress (ANC), came to believe that educated Africans should not protest to change society, but should instead struggle to become a part of a competitive culture. As a result of taking on Washington's accommodationist philosophy and Black capitalist stance, ANC leaders appealed to white benevolence and could no longer afford to support anti-business or anti-government forces. At the same time, however, Marable notes that in spite of his accommodationist politics, Washington actively sought to build Black racial pride, and was even an early influence on Marcus Garvey.

Andrew Zimmerman builds on Harlan's and Marable's works and makes an even more complex case about Washington in his book *Alabama in Africa: Booker T. Washington, the German Empire, and the Globalization of the New South*. In this text, Zimmerman argues that Booker T. Washington was as politically progressive as W.E.B. Du Bois until he began supporting German imperialism. In fact, Zimmerman claims that with the power he won through his "Atlantic Compromise," Washington developed a pedagogical and political agenda that, for a brief time, promised to improve the economic conditions of African Americans in ways that could have challenged the social order of the New South (Zimmerman, 2010, p.52). However, Washington abandoned these plans as soon as he began working with the German colonial state in Togo to reproduce the New South cotton economy in Africa. According to Zimmerman, German colonial authorities approached Washington because they hoped he would be able to bring to Africa the industrial education he used in the New South to turn Africans into diligent and compliant laborers who could contribute to a modern, postslavery economy. Since the African American colonization of Africa formed a central part of the abolition of the slave trade, many abolitionists, including Martin R. Delaney, also supported colonization during this time. Thus, the Tuskegee expedition to Togo participated in a program of forced cotton cultivation and compulsory training that transformed both African agriculture as well as African gender, sexuality, and familial relations, imposing monogamous, patriarchal domesticity on households that had previously afforded family members a great deal of autonomy. Moreover, because of colonial cotton's long-standing relationship with Black Americans, the Tuskegee Institute also participated in a project of colonial identity formation, imposing a "Negro" identity to ascribe the subordinate political and economic positions of African Americans in the New South onto African ethnic groups. Zimmerman further argues that Washington's work in Africa had a reciprocal effect on his educational program in the United States; the more Washington became involved in colonial entanglements, the more he reduced Tuskegee's academic curriculum. Additionally, because of Robert E. Park, who was a sociologist at Tuskegee and close advisor to Washington, the Tuskegee project also contributed to the founding of the Chicago school of sociology, which was designed to help economic elites devise pedagogies that would accommodate workers of various racial backgrounds to the global capitalist division of labor. Thus, for Zimmerman, Washington's Tuskegee project simply represented a more "humanitarian" and "progressive" version of colonialism.

The historiography of Booker T. Washington thus paints a complex, and at times, contradictory portrait of the Black leader. Washington has been critiqued for advocating an educational policy that serves the interests of white capitalists and upholds racial proscription. Historians have since unpacked the ways by which Washington's accommodationism went hand in hand with his pro-colonialist and pro-capitalist views, as well as his promotion of Black racial pride. Only recently, however, have historians also begun to identify Washington as a progressive and a pragmatist. The reason for this omission is likely due to the white-washing of progressive historiography. Interestingly, scholars who see Washington as a progressive have also tended to defend his educational philosophy as beneficial for Black racial uplift. For Generals, Washington's progressivism automatically made his vision of industrial education "democratic." However, neither Washington's critics nor defenders have connected the similarities between Washington and Dewey as a critique of progressivism itself.

Both Dewey and Washington believed that knowledge should be constructed from students' experiences, and emphasized the relationship between education and the social environment. It can also be argued that both Dewey's and Washington's theories of education are anchored within pragmatist philosophy, though Washington never identified as a pragmatist himself. At the same time, both leaders' philosophies of education have also been critiqued for upholding racial proscription. Dewey's vision of progressive education was never meant to include African Americans, and Dewey supported segregated schooling for Black children on the grounds that Black culture was "behind" on the evolutionary scale. Similarly, Washington's industrial education sought to "civilize" the "Negro" through an "education for life" that mirrored the "education" received through slavery. Thus, both Dewey and Washington can be considered early founders of progressive education. This is significant considering how scholars have demonstrated the various ways by which the thinking of both leaders reinscribed the dominant racial order.

Conclusion

This chapter has sought to examine a fundamental contradiction within social justice education by looking at the history of progressive education and its relationship to race. Though social justice education has become increasingly popular as a means for addressing existing social inequalities, at its heart, social justice education expounds many of the same principles that have marked progressive education since Dewey's time. In drawing on progressive education, social justice education calls for a pedagogical model by which students construct knowledge from their own experiences, while simultaneously developing an explicit critique of the social order that would lead them to take action on behalf of a more democratic and socially just world. However, the history of progressive education demonstrates that as a whole, progressives have not had a good track record on issues related to race and racial equity. Dewey's own pedagogical model was designed with only white children in mind, as Dewey himself did not see non-white children as cultural equivalents. Similarly, Booker T. Washington's advocacy of progressive education was paired with the loss of civil and political rights for Black people.

This dissertation draws on this historical analysis of progressive education as a lens for examining the affordances and limitations of progressive pedagogies for teaching social justice today. While scholars have demonstrated how progressive educators have historically upheld

racial proscription and served to reproduce existing social inequalities for the sake of social harmony, fewer scholars have examined the continuity between progressive education and social justice education today. Unlike progressive education, social justice education makes a more explicit commitment to addressing questions of power and inequality, including oppression in its many forms (Adams, Bell, Goodman, & Joshi, 2016; Hackman, 2005; Picower, 2012). However, pedagogically, social justice education today draws on the same principles and practices that have defined progressive education since the turn of the century. Thus, this study examines the affordances and limitations of social justice education in achieving its social justice goals, given its reliance on progressive pedagogical approaches.

Chapter 3

Literature Review

Educational theorists have long debated the relationship between the development of students' self-directed thinking and the cultivation of their explicit ideological critique. This chapter will delineate the various ways by which educational theorists have sought to resolve this dilemma, where they agree and disagree, as well as continuing gaps in the literature.

Of educational theorists concerned with this paradox, John Dewey is perhaps most well-known. Writing in response to the rapid social changes caused by industrialization, Dewey found himself situated within intense debates amongst progressive educators of the time, as described by Cremin (1964) and Kliebard (2004). In response, Dewey sought to invent a philosophy that could transcend these differences. Concerned with losing what he considered the valuable, educative components of pre-industrial life, Dewey argues in *School and Society* that the household and neighborhood production system was educationally beneficial in the development of character and discipline, "training in habits of order and of industry, and in the idea of responsibility, of obligation to do something, to produce something, in the world" (Dewey, 1899, p.24). In pre-industrial life, the individual's authentic needs also met those of society's. For Dewey, this harmonious relationship was disrupted by the individualism and competitiveness of modern capitalism. He thought that turning schools into "embryonic communities," in which the school is a genuine part of community life, rather than a separate space to learn lessons, could rectify these ills. Thus, Dewey supported manual training and a child-centered education, primarily because he saw them as effective means for building social bonds and developing the common spirit of productive activity.

Dewey's pedagogical beliefs were consistent with his larger political and philosophical worldview. He saw democracy as "a way of life" and believed that "the perfection of both the individual and the social organism [was possible] through the harmonious development of the powers and capacities of all the individuals in a society" (Westbrook, 1991, p.41). In arguing that "individuality cannot be opposed to association" (Westbrook, 1991, p.44), Dewey made the claim that there is a dialectical relationship between individuality and community; individuals realize themselves only as members of a community, and only those who did so were truly free. At the same time, however, Dewey was critical of child-centered progressives for being overly romantic. He believed that there is a difference between positive freedom and negative freedom, and that because teachers are more experienced, they have a right and obligation to suggest to their students what to do. For Dewey, freedom is not an original possession, but rather, comes through critical engagement with the accumulated knowledge of mankind. Dewey also distanced himself from more radical social reconstructionists who believed that capitalism could not be reconstructed into a more humane social order unless the conservative indoctrination students were subjected to was challenged by radical counterindoctrination (Westbrook, 1991, p. 506). In response, Dewey argued that counterindoctrination would be counterproductive and antidemocratic. He believed that through problem-solving, students could generate real solutions to the problems of the social order that would lead to the creation of a democratic society. Thus, he sought to reconcile the contradiction between constructivist pedagogies and the development of an explicitly democratic worldview through a pedagogical method by which children develop democratic dispositions through experiential learning.

Boyd Bode builds off of Dewey's work and makes similar claims in his 1938 publication,

Progressive Education at the Crossroads. In this text, Bode critiqued progressive educators for attempting to build a school program based on children's needs and interests without a clear social philosophy. Instead, he argued that progressive education needs to be guided by a social ideal in order to truly be democratic. Even more so than Dewey, Bode was skeptical of child-centered progressives' romantic and sentimental views of children, which he argued encourages individualism and absolutism (Bode, 1938, p.40). Bode challenged the perspective popular amongst progressive educators at the time, which sought to avoid imposition on children. He argued that fear of imposition is equally anti-democratic, for a democratic program of education must challenge all forms of absolutism. Alternatively, he believed that children need character and discipline in order to be free, and direction for navigating the social order. At the same time, however, Bode also claimed that schools must be respectful of the attitudes and values that students bring with them. In the same way that students may be misguided, Bode notes that we can't assume the teacher is well-guided either. Moreover, he highlights the fact that there is a contradiction involved in expecting teachers to cultivate democracy but also respect "self-direction" for children. As Bode argued, it is impossible to teach democracy without ceasing to be democratic (Bode, 1938, p.81). On the one hand, Bode continued advocating child-centered pedagogies, and on the other, he emphasized the importance of having a predetermined social program, thus illustrating the contradiction between these two positions.

However, not all progressive educators responded to this tension between child-centered approaches to learning and indoctrination for social reconstructionism in the same way. Like Bode, George Counts (1932) argued that the progressive education movement as a whole lacked direction and purpose and had failed to elaborate a theory of social welfare, other than anarchy or extreme individualism (Counts, 1932, p.7). For Counts, this resulted in progressive education reproducing rather than challenging dominant conservative forces. He says:

If Progressive Education is to be genuinely progressive, it must emancipate itself from the influence of this class, face squarely and courageously every social issue, come to grips with life in all its stark reality, establish an organic relation with the community, develop a realistic and comprehensive theory of welfare, fashion a compelling and challenging vision of human destiny, and become less frightened than it is today at the bogies of *imposition* and *indoctrination*. In a word, Progressive Education cannot place its trust in a child-centered school (Counts, 1932, p.9-10).

Counts believed that it is a "fallacy that man is born free" (Counts, 1932, p.13). Rather, imposition is always happening, as children are molded by their environments. Thus, in an unjust social order, children face "the imposition of the chaos and cruelty and ugliness produced by the brutish struggle for existence and advantage" (Counts, 1932, p.27). In response, Counts argued that progressive educators should actually embrace indoctrination, for it would be better to indoctrinate children with democratic commitments than to allow them to become "completely victimized and molded by the mechanics of industrialism" (Counts, 1932, p.27). He called on teachers to advance the interests of the common people and use education as a force for social change, for he believed that under the current economic system, democracy could not survive (Counts, 1932, p.45). Unlike Dewey and Bode, Counts responded to the debate between constructivist progressives and social reconstructionists by claiming that explicit ideological critique trumped the imperative to honor the individuality and autonomy of the child. For Counts, the conservative nature of the dominant social order was an objective fact found in society, not in the experience of the learner. He believed these forces are so powerful that

indoctrination for a democratic society was necessary and justified.

In thinking about the tension between constructivist pedagogies and explicit ideological critique, Dewey and Counts represent two sides of the same dilemma. On the one hand, Dewey addressed this paradox by arguing that it is not, in fact, a paradox. For Dewey, education and social action are a mutually constituting, iterative process. Because Dewey believed that the individual and society exist in harmonious, dialectical relationship to each other, he also saw experiential learning as meeting both the individual's authentic needs and those of society's. In other words, he believed constructivist pedagogies could cultivate democratic dispositions in students, which could in turn lead to the development of a future democratic society. However, in making these claims, Dewey assumes the harmonious society he is trying to create. In his study of Arthurdale, a white, working-class community that embodied Deweyan principles, Perlstein (2016) found that "exploration of the unfolding ways humans met their needs could not illuminate the exploitation they experienced. Rather, the celebration of pioneer economic and cultural life...served to discourage students' engagement with their most pressing political and economic questions" (p.136). At the same time, however, while Counts' pedagogical approach did offer a critique of the political-economic order, his call for indoctrination failed to account for the virtues of self-directed thinking. Moreover, though Counts advocated indoctrination, he never fully abandoned child-centered approaches either, and was ultimately never able to reconcile the two (Perlstein, 2000).

In more recent times, Paulo Freire (1970) too has sought to resolve the contradiction between a constructivist approach to learning and a theory of education that can lead students to an explicit critique of the social order. In his landmark work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire delineated a pedagogical approach by which the oppressed come to "critical consciousness" of their status as an oppressed people in an oppressive reality. Freire believed that this demystification of the social order would in turn lead to humanization. At the same time, however, Freire claimed that a truly "liberating" education must also allow students to construct knowledge from their own experiences and affirm their individual autonomy (Freire, 1970). This is because a "banking" approach, in which the teacher inculcates students with their ideas, would only reproduce the oppressive pedagogical practices and social relations of the dominant social order. Freire wrote, "in the revolutionary process, the leaders cannot utilize the banking method as an interim measure, justified on grounds of expediency, with the intention of later behaving in a genuinely revolutionary fashion. They must be revolutionary—that is to say, dialogical—from the outset" (Freire, 1970, p. 86).

Freire's "problem posing" education resolves many of the limitations confronted by both Dewey and Counts. Unlike Dewey, Freire's analysis of the social order begins with the problem of oppression. Rather than seeing society as fundamentally harmonious, Freire understood that dehumanization is a "concrete historical fact... [though] not a given destiny but the result of an unjust order that engenders violence in the oppressors, which in turn dehumanizes the oppressed" (Freire, 1970, p. 44). Even while arguing that dialogue is an integral aspect of liberating action, Freire wrote from a Marxist perspective, and noted that "dialogue between the former oppressors and the oppressed as antagonistic classes was not possible before the revolution, [and] it continues to be impossible afterward" (Freire, 1970, p. 139). Moreover, unlike Counts, Freire developed a pedagogical method that explicitly used a constructivist approach to demystify social reality. Through the examination of "generative themes," the oppressed reflect on their own existential experiences and engage in dialogue to reveal the character of the limit-situations in which people are reduced to things (Freire, 1970, p.103). In part, Freire circumvented the

dilemmas encountered by Dewey and Counts by developing a pedagogy that focused explicitly on the oppressed, whose experiences, scholars have argued, may give them privileged access to knowledge that illuminates the oppressive features of social reality (Hill Collins, 2000; Harding & Norberg, 2005).

Yet, scholars have also illuminated the limitations of Freire's approach. Writing around the same time as Freire, Ivan Illich developed a theory of education that centered the significance of educational institutions themselves as mechanisms of oppression. In his book *Deschooling Society*, Illich argued that schooling is the primary source of social oppression, and thus, of potential radical liberation. Critiquing Marxists who argue that an economic and political revolution is necessary to solve society's ills, Illich instead claimed that because schools cause oppression, deschooling – abolishing schools – is “at the root of any movement for human liberation” (Illich, 1971, p.47). In fact, he argued that “the alienation of modern society in a pedagogical sense is even worse than its economic alienation” (Illich, 1971, p.23). Illich believed that schools did not actually promote learning, but were rather a means of social control that created social inequality through the use of certifications to delineate differential social rankings. According to Illich, schools, like other welfare institutions, are “treatment institutions”, “social agencies which specialize in the manipulation of their clients” (Illich, 1971, p.54) by “invit[ing] compulsiv[e] repetitive use and frustrat[ing] alternative ways of achieving similar results” (Illich, 1971, p.56). From this perspective, “education” is the “result of an institutional process managed by the educator” (Illich, p.1971, 70), rather than an organic process of learning. This creates learned helplessness as students confuse “schooling” with “learning”. According to Illich, schools thus have an “anti-educational effect” on the child (Illich, 1971, p.8).

In response, Illich argued that schools should become “convivial” institutions, institutions people use without having to be convinced to do so (Illich, 1971, p.55). Examples of “convivial” institutions include sidewalks, subways, mail routes, sewage systems, drinking water, and parks. Instead of being coercive, the rules that govern such institutions exist solely for the purpose of ensuring their accessibility. According to Illich, education can become “convivial” if learning is separated from social control (Illich, 1971, p.19). For Illich, this can be possible if schools are replaced by “learning webs,” decentralized communication networks that connect those who want to learn with those who want to teach, and vice versa. Echoing the *laissez faire* model of the Anarchists, Illich believed that everyone is both a student and a teacher (Illich, 1971, 75), and individuals should be able to study what they actually *want* to know as opposed to what schools want to teach them.

Thus, like Freire and unlike Counts, Illich too developed a theory of education in which constructivist learning and ideological critique went hand in hand. Because he saw *schools* as the source of oppression, he believed that replacing schools with a convivial model of education could simultaneously allow for both free critical thinking and social liberation. Moreover, unlike Dewey, Illich's theory of education understood social reality as fundamentally mystified as the result of oppressive social systems; for Illich, schools could never create a future democratic society, because schools are in fact, the primary sources of oppression. In contrast to Freire, however, Illich saw the State, and the bureaucracy and conformity it breeds, as the primary mechanism of oppression, rather than capitalism. For Illich, schools are fundamentally oppressive, independent of the degree to which they reproduce capitalist relations of exploitation. Communist schools would be equally oppressive as Capitalist schools because Illich saw the State itself is an institution of social control. Thus, Illich's work illuminates the limitations of developing students' ideological critique in formal school settings, where the vast majority of

students are educated. Because Freire worked largely in informal educational spaces, his work provides limited guidance for teachers working in these settings.

Freire's work also neglects to address the dilemma involved in using a constructivist pedagogical approach to illuminate social reality when students construct knowledge from an environment and consciousness already structured by relations of oppression. Frantz Fanon provides this critique in his text *Black Skin, White Masks*. A Martinique-born Afro-French psychiatrist who served as a political theorist for the Algerian National Liberation Front, Fanon argued that "a Black is not a man [for] there is a zone of nonbeing" (Fanon, 1952, p.xii). In contrast to Freire, Fanon explicitly identifies *color* as the marker that delineates between human and non-human: "colour is the most obvious outward manifestation of race [and thus] it has been made the criterion by which men are judged irrespective of their social or educational attainments" (Fanon, 1952, p. 97). As a result of this judgment, Fanon found that "it was impossible to rid myself of an *innate complex*, to assert myself as a BLACK MAN...I was hated, detested, and despised, not by my next-door neighbor or a close cousin, but by an entire race" (Fanon, 1952, p. 95-97). Thus, Fanon argues that colonized peoples have internalized an "inferiority complex" that makes them believe "the more he rejects his blackness and the bush, the whiter he will become" (Fanon, 1952, p.3). Moreover, this "internalization or rather epidermalization" (Fanon, 1952, p.xv) of inferiority is not so much a feeling, as dehumanization itself. He writes: "A feeling of inferiority? No, a feeling of not existing. Sin is black as virtue is white. All those white men, fingering their guns, can't be wrong. I am guilty. I don't know what of, but I know I'm a wretch" (Fanon, 1952, p.118). The racialized subject is epidermalized through the white gaze, for "in the white world, the man of color encounters difficulties in elaborating his body schema. The image of one's body is solely negating...it is not imposed on me; it is rather a definitive structuring of my self and the world – definitive because it creates a genuine dialectic between my body and the world" (Fanon, 1952, p.91). Thus, for Fanon, the epidermal quality of race leads to the construction of certain binaries: body/world, black/white, colonized/colonizer, oppressed/ oppressor.

Fanon's ontological analysis of race and internalized racism illuminates the ways by which an understanding of racial oppression may shape the tension between constructivist approaches to learning and ideological critique. Fanon's theory of humanization is based on the notion that the wretched of the earth do not have the capacity to construct knowledge from their experiences because they have so thoroughly internalized their own oppression. Freire and Fanon disagree on the extent to which oppression is internalized – and thus, on the degree to which learners are able to decipher social reality based on their experiences. Freire understands internalized oppression primarily from a Marxist perspective; dehumanization is related to the exploitation of labor, which leads to workers being alienated from their own life activities. In contrast, though Fanon sees racism and capitalism as related, he is primarily concerned with how the act of colonization appropriates one's *being* rather than one's *labor*. From a Fanonian analysis of race, dehumanization is an ontological process more so than an economic one. Moreover, Fanon's work calls into question the efficacy of constructivist pedagogical approaches for developing students' ideological critique given the internalization of dominant ideologies.

Finally, while some feminist scholars like bell hooks (1994) have embraced Freirean pedagogy as a form of feminist pedagogy, others like Kathleen Weiler, have argued that Freire's vision of liberatory pedagogy is still based on claims to universal truths and assumptions of collective experiences of oppression that are not true to reality. For example, Weiler argues that universal goals of liberation do not address the contradictions between conflicting oppressed

groups or the ways by which a single individual can experience oppression in one way, while being privileged in another (Weiler, 1991, p.450). This critique has implications for the relationship between constructivist pedagogies and explicit ideological critique, for as Weiler notes, teachers hold (or lack) power outside of their position of authority, as a result of their subject position as a raced, classed, and gendered being. Furthermore, one cannot simply assume that the teacher is “on the same side” as the oppressed. In response, Weiler claims that feminist pedagogy provides a more situated theory of oppression and subjectivity that challenges universal claims to truth. Like Freirean pedagogy, feminist pedagogy is based on assumptions of the power of consciousness raising, the existence of oppression, and the desire for social transformation.

In a similar poststructuralist critique, Elizabeth Ellsworth (1989) has argued that in being based on rationalist assumptions, critical pedagogy gives rise to repressive myths that perpetuate relations of domination. According to Ellsworth, “critical” is a code word that hides actual political agendas and offers only the most abstract, decontextualized criteria for choosing one moral position over others. Moreover, critical pedagogy is based on the assumption that students and teachers can and should engage each other in the classroom as fully rational subjects. However, such assumptions of rationality have always operated in contradiction to an irrational “Other”, which has historically been understood as the province of women, people of color, and others who deviate from white, heterosexual, middle-class norms. In the context of schools, rational deliberation and reflection has thus become a vehicle for regulating the power to speak, transforming conflict into rational argument by means of presumed universalized capacities for language and reason. For Ellsworth, pedagogical strategies often used by critical pedagogues such as student empowerment and dialogue give the illusion of equality while in fact leaving intact the authoritarian nature of the teacher/student relationship. Moreover, in a classroom in which “empowerment” is dependent on rationalism, perspectives that question the political interests expressed and guaranteed by rationalism (ie, patriarchy, racism, colonialism) would be rejected as irrational, biased, partial. Like Weiler, Ellsworth also critiques the assumption within critical pedagogy that the teacher is themselves an emancipated subject, arguing instead that no teacher is free of internalizing dominant ideologies, and is also a racialized, classed, and gendered subject. For Ellsworth, Freirean pedagogy is problematic in that it fails to acknowledge the ways by which all voices and subjectivities are always partial, multiple, and contradictory. In response, Ellsworth argues that collective struggle must start from an acknowledgement that political “unity” is necessarily fragmentary and unstable, not a given, but chosen and struggled for. Thus, the task of social justice education today is not to build “democratic” dialogue between “free” and “equal” individuals, but to build coalitions among multiple, shifting, intersecting, and sometimes contradictory groups. Weiler’s and Ellsworth’s critiques shed new light on the tension between constructivist learning and ideological end goals. For poststructuralist feminists, neither approach is necessarily liberatory. While constructivism presumes that the student is a stable, rational subject, poststructuralists would argue that subjectivity is always multiple, partial, and contradictory. At the same time, feminist poststructuralists also argue that even explicit ideological goals may contradict each other, and the extent to which they challenge oppression depends on particular local, social, and cultural contexts.

Thus, the tension between the cultivation of students’ self-directed thinking and the development of their explicit critique of oppression continues to be an enduring dilemma. Educational theorists have proposed various pedagogical approaches for addressing this

dilemma. Dewey, for example, believed that individuals realize themselves only as members of a community. Therefore, his model of progressive education sought to develop democratic dispositions in children through experiential education, and thus reconcile the tension between constructivist pedagogies and explicit ideological goals. In so doing, however, Dewey assumes a fundamentally harmonious society, rather than one structured by oppression. In contrast, though Counts' embrace of explicit critique over constructivism allows for a more overt illumination of the dominant ideologies that structure society, Counts failed to account for the virtues of self-directed thinking. Freire's problem-posing education reconciles these two perspectives by explicitly drawing from the experiences of the oppressed, with the aim of leading students to "critical consciousness" of the realities of oppression. At the same time, however, Freire's primarily Marxist analysis of oppression neglects to account for 1) the ways by which formal schooling itself may be oppressive, independent of the degree to which it reproduces capitalist relations of exploitation; 2) the ways by which the internalization of dominant ideologies may prevent the construction of knowledge from experience from illuminating social reality; and 3) the poststructuralist critique that both subjectivity and ideological goals are always multiple, partial, and contradictory. Furthermore, while scholars have examined the tension between students' self-directed thinking and the cultivation of their critique of oppression in theory, few have examined it in practice.

This dissertation addresses these concerns by examining *how* educators navigated the tension between the cultivation of students' self-directed learning and the development of their explicit ideological critique of oppression in an undergraduate teacher education course. In so doing, this dissertation illuminates the affordances and limitations of the range of ways teachers navigate this dilemma, as it relates to the cultivation of students' understanding of and commitment to social justice. Moreover, this project will focus on how this dilemma manifests in the context of formal schooling, with students of multiple, contradicting positionalities, in an environment structured by relations of oppression, and imbued with dominant ideologies.

Chapter 4

Data, Methods, & Research Design

Using one semester of data collected from three different sections of ED280, an undergraduate teacher education class at Stanley University⁵, my dissertation answers the following:

- 1) When, how, and why did instructors of ED280 use constructivist pedagogical approaches? Are there tensions that arise when instructors attempt to cultivate both students' self-directed critical thinking and their critique of existing social inequalities? If so, how did teachers and students respond, and what effects did this have on students' commitment to social justice values?
- 2) How did a formal school setting impact the affordances and limitations of using constructivist pedagogical approaches to cultivate students' commitment to social justice? How and when did instructors enforce institutional technologies (curricular standards, grades, etc.) to exercise their authority, given their commitments to both constructivist learning and social justice education, while at the same time being an agent of the institution in which they worked? How did this impact student learning?
- 3) What were the affordances and limitations of using constructivist pedagogical approaches to teach social justice with students of multiple positionalities, particularly when constructing knowledge from an environment and consciousness already imbued with oppression? What impact did these approaches have on students' learning and commitment to social justice?

I study a teacher education course because it best illuminates the tension between self-directed thinking and the cultivation of social justice values, given that instructors of these classes both navigate and aim to elucidate this tension for their students, who will soon be teachers themselves. Moreover, scholars have demonstrated the long-term positive impact that social justice teachers can have on students' sense of self and commitment to civic values (Harrell-Levy, Kerpelman, & Henry, 2016). Thus, it is important to understand how to cultivate teachers' own sense of social justice, and the pedagogical dilemmas involved in doing so. Moreover, I conducted this study at Stanley University because it is rooted in a political climate that values both autonomous self-direction and the explicit critique of social inequality. Students at Stanley University also uniquely navigate their positionalities of relative privilege with the meritocratic claims of formal schooling, at one of the most selective public universities in the country.

Thus, ED280 was the ideal site for answering my research questions. Taught by three queer instructors of differing racial backgrounds (myself, an Asian American woman; Sarah, a white woman; and Tiana, a Black woman), the course also attracted students from various, often contradicting, social positions and class backgrounds. Drawing from critical and feminist pedagogies, ED280 used a constructivist approach that privileged students' self-directed learning, the construction of knowledge from experience, and the creation of a democratic classroom within a formal school setting. At the same time, the course also aimed to cultivate students' critique of social inequalities and commitment to social justice through social action. To achieve these goals, the course encouraged students to reflect upon their own positionalities within larger systems of power, and asked students to complete a "Community Cooperative Project," in which they addressed an educational issue of their choice using participatory action research (McIntyre, 2008). Drawing on the Freirean tradition, participatory action research

⁵ Names have been changed to protect participants' identities.

presents an alternative to positivist research methodologies by challenging hierarchical relationships of power in the research process, centering the participation of those most impacted, and seeking to empower oppressed communities. Consistent with the course and its focus on social justice education, critical pedagogy, and feminist pedagogy, participatory action research too aims to use a progressive approach to research for the pursuit of social justice ends.

Though ethnography (LeCompte & Schensul, 2010), autoethnography (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011), action research (Herr & Anderson, 2005), and social design experimentation (Gutiérrez & Jurow, 2016), share many common features, I drew from each in different ways as a means for reflexive investigation of the wider cultural, political, and social meanings implicated by this learning ecology. As both researcher and instructor of one of the three sections of the course, I employed autoethnographic action research methodologies in which researchers are insiders, studying their own practice through systemic, self-reflective, and collaborative inquiry (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011; Herr & Anderson, 2005). Unlike positivist research methods, autoethnographic action research acknowledges and accommodates for subjectivity, emotionality, and the researcher's influence on research, rather than assuming they don't exist. Like autobiographers, autoethnographers retrospectively and selectively write about epiphanies - remembered moments perceived to have significantly impacted the trajectory of a person's life - that are made possible by being part of a particular culture. Unlike autobiographers, however, autoethnographers also systematically analyze these experiences and use their personal experiences to make characteristics of a culture familiar for insiders and outsiders. This study primarily relies on narrative ethnography, in which the ethnographer's experiences are incorporated into the ethnographic descriptions and analysis of others. Thus, particular attention was paid to the interactions between the narrator (instructor) and student participants.

Additionally, I drew from social design (Gutiérrez & Jurow, 2016) in developing the course according to constructivist and social justice principles so as to understand the impact of the former on the latter. The course was designed with deep attention to 1) history and historicity, including how they relate to resilience, sustainability, and equity; 2) re-mediating activity - on reorganizing the functional system, rather than individuals; 3) understanding that cultural and other forms of diversity are key resources for sustainability; 4) equity across the design process, including its theorization, design, and implementation; 5) resilience and change, whereby the individual, the collective, and the ecology are all implicated; and 6) an end goal of transformation and sustainability. ED280 paid particular attention to both students' personal histories, and the ways by which their positionalities have been constructed through historic and present-day inequalities. The course also leveraged the experiences and knowledges of students from non-dominant communities as one of several means for actively deconstructing relations of power in the classroom. Additionally, ED280 sought to create historical actors through the re-organization of systems of activity in which participants were involved in designing their own projects for social transformation, and in the co-construction of the course itself. Finally, ED280 used an iterative design in which the curriculum itself was open-ended and responsive to student feedback. The instructors met with student course assistants⁶ each week to reflect upon the course and amend its design accordingly, and actively solicited student feedback and participation in the course design throughout the entire length of the course.

⁶ Course assistants were students who took ED280 in previous semesters and participated in co-teaching the course the following semester. Such student participation in teaching the course was integral to ED280's democratic and progressive ethos.

Data included field notes and video recordings of all class sessions of ED280, which each met for 2 hours twice a week during the Spring of 2017. I also analyzed student written assignments, teacher interviews, 22 student interviews, and my own lesson plans and journal entries. To assure students that their grades would not be impacted by their responses to interview questions, or by participation/non-participation in the study, all interviews were conducted after students received their final grades. Students interviewed were selected to represent a range of social positions and ideological perspectives, and included those who had both positive and negative experiences with the course. Interviews were also reflexive and dyadic, focusing not just on the participants' stories, but also on the relationship with the researcher, given my involved participation in the course itself. I also interviewed 27 students from previous semesters of ED280 as well as 2 former instructors. Though their data was not included in this analysis, they informed my understanding of the course and the consistency of my findings. Furthermore, though data was collected and analyzed from both Sarah's and Tiana's classes, greater attention was paid to Sarah's class given her focus on constructivist methods (Tiana's pedagogical practices will be described in further detail in Chapter 5).

To answer my first research question, I examined when and how teachers used constructivist methods, and students' responses. I paid particular attention to whether – and which – tensions arose between instructors' goals (of cultivating students' critique of oppression) and their practices (which centered students' self-directed thinking). I analyzed teacher interviews, journal entries, lesson plans, field notes, and video recordings of classroom dialogues to understand teachers' goals and pedagogical practices. I then analyzed student interviews, field notes, video recordings of classroom dialogues, and student written assignments to examine the effects of constructivist pedagogical approaches on students' understanding of and commitment to social justice values.

To answer my second research question, which addresses the affordances and limitations of using constructivist approaches to cultivate students' commitment to social justice in formal school settings, I analyzed when and how teachers exercised their authority, given their commitments to progressive pedagogies. Teachers' authority is the focus of this analysis due to the teacher's position as an agent of institutional power. In teaching anti-oppressive curricula, critical educators often aim to critique institutional power, while being paid agents of the institution themselves. This creates a dilemma for the teacher who exercises their authority while at the same time seeking to undermine it. Thus, I examine how and when instructors of ED280 enforced institutional technologies (curricular standards, attendance, grades, etc.), and student responses to these practices. I examine grades on student coursework, field notes, journal entries, and recordings of classroom discussions around assignments and grading. I also interviewed teachers to examine how they understood their own authority, their work in relation to the creation of citizens, and their relationship to the institution. To understand the effects on student learning, I analyzed student interviews that discussed their perceptions of how teachers' practices influenced their ability to direct their own learning and/or their commitment to social justice.

My third research question addresses the affordances and limitations of constructivist pedagogical approaches in teaching social justice, given both the social environment from which students construct knowledge (and the dominant discourses within it), and students' multiple positionalities. To answer this question, I analyzed field notes, video recordings, student written assignments, and student interviews, to examine students' interpretations of dominant ideologies, given teachers' constructivist approaches. I paid particular attention to how these interpretations varied based on students' multiple, varying positionalities, and how dominant discourses in

students' social environment impacted their interpretations. I then analyzed field notes and video recordings to interrogate teachers' responses to students' interpretations, and whether/how these responses varied depending on whether students' interpretations aligned with teachers' social justice goals. I also focused on moments in which students constructed knowledge from their experiences and came to conclusions that contradicted the teacher's social justice goals. In these moments, I document how the teacher responded, and analyzed whether these responses upheld social justice or constructivist goals. I also interviewed teacher and students to understand how teachers conceptualized their objectives (in relation to their social justice goals and constructivist pedagogy), and what effects this had on student learning. Finally, I studied student written assignments as another medium of analysis to determine the impact on students' ideologies.

I analyzed my data using MAXQDA, a qualitative data analysis program that supports a multi-level, open-ended and focused thematic coding process that was simultaneously inductive and deductive (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). I created activity logs for recorded classroom dialogues, transcribed all interviews, and coded the data. Coding enabled me to systematically sift through the discrete and loosely related pedagogical moments I found in my field notes, journal entries, activity logs, interview transcripts, and student written assignments to produce a focused analysis (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). Using open coding, I read my data line-by-line to organize and find patterns in the ideas and themes that emerged. I then coded collapsed categories thematically to achieve a broad overview of findings. I also used focused coding to more closely examine the affordances and limitations of using constructivist pedagogical approaches to teach social justice in 1) formal school settings; 2) given dominant discourses in students' social environment; and 3) given students' multiple positionalities. While coding, I elaborated on insights I found in the data and connected analytic themes by writing analytic memos. Finally, I created new thematic categories to describe the relationship between findings and connected these together to construct a written narrative.

Chapter 5

“Democratic” Education and the Dilemma of Teaching Against Oppression

Introduction

Jessica, a student in Sarah’s class, walked into the classroom wearing a sign that read “I support free speech, which means I support protests, controversial speakers, and diversity of ideas, all of which are essential to the marketplace of ideas, democracy, and critical thinking.” Just the week before, campus Republicans invited A.G., a well-known public speaker associated with Breitbart News, a self-described far-right opinion and commentary website (Farhi, 2019), to Stanley’s campus to give a well-publicized talk. While Breitbart calls itself “the Huffington Post of the right,” (Rainey, 2012) its content has been described as misogynistic, xenophobic, and racist, by critics across the political spectrum. The invitation of A.G. to Stanley’s campus provoked a strong response by protestors who successfully prevented A.G. from speaking after confrontation with campus police. In fact, Sarah, the instructor, was one of these organizers. She believed that within this context, Jessica’s efforts to promote free speech in reality gave a platform to A.G. and other white nationalist and “alt-right” speakers. Yet, she taught a class on “democratic” education and also believed in the importance of limiting teachers’ authority and allowing students to direct their own thinking. Thus, Sarah was faced with a dilemma. On the one hand, if she ignored Jessica’s signage, she would implicitly condone Jessica’s message, and make space for views that directly contradicted the social justice objectives of her class. On the other hand, if she asked Jessica not to wear the sign, she would be limiting Jessica’s self-directed thinking and freedom of expression, contradicting the democratic ideals of the course.

Teachers’ authority has long been a point of tension for critical pedagogues and other social justice educators concerned with the centering of students’ agency and the creation of “democratic” classroom spaces. In prioritizing students’ self-directed thinking, critical pedagogues aim to limit teachers’ authority and create non-hierarchical relationships between teacher and students (Freire, 1970; Shor, 1992). Yet, they also seek to advance certain (social justice) objectives. As a result, teachers are faced with a dilemma. Should the teacher enforce their social justice objectives, they would inhibit the agency of the student. However, without intervening, the teacher would neglect to address their own social justice objectives, thus enabling the reproduction of dominant ideologies. How could social justice educators respond to this paradox, given their institutionally sanctioned positions of power?

This chapter examines how Sarah, a self-identified social justice educator, navigated this dilemma. In particular, this chapter examines how Sarah understood and expressed her authority given her twin goals of creating a “democratic” classroom space, and cultivating students’ understanding of and commitment to particular social justice ideals. This dilemma is particularly salient for social justice educators, who, unlike “traditional” educators, also reject traditional sources of teachers’ authority (the State). This chapter then examines how Sarah’s

understandings and articulations of authority impacted her evaluation of students' learning, particularly as they related to her social justice goals. Finally, Sarah's approaches are compared with those of Tiana, another instructor of the same course.

Findings demonstrate that in simultaneously seeking to create a "democratic" classroom space *and* lead students to explicit ideological commitments, Sarah sent mixed messages to her students, which resulted in each goal undermining the other. In contrast, Tiana explicitly prioritized particular ideological goals over the creation of a "democratic" classroom. This strategy better enabled her to evaluate the development of students' critique of oppression, while still incorporating democratic teaching methods in her class. These findings do *not* implicate either Sarah or Tiana as a "better" or "worse" teacher. Rather, these findings illuminate the affordances and limitations of the different strategies social justice teachers use to navigate the tension involved in simultaneously seeking to center students' agency and cultivate particular social justice commitments – tensions that all social justice educators experience. These findings illustrate *how* "democratic" teaching methods can come into tension with the cultivation of students' social justice commitments, and argues for the prioritization of the latter.

Revisiting Teacher's Authority

Social justice educators have long struggled with the question of teacher's authority. For critical theorists, a core function of schooling is to reproduce social and racial inequalities. From this perspective, schooling is a state-sponsored institutional process that inducts young people into their roles in an economically stratified society (Bowles & Gintis, 1977; Carlson, 1987). The State itself is "a 'machine' of repression, which enables the ruling classes...to ensure their domination over the working class, thus enabling the former to subject the latter to the process of surplus-value extortion (i.e. to capitalist exploitation)" (Althusser, 1971). As arms of the State, schools and their agents (teachers) are thus responsible for the reproduction of oppressive worldviews, modes of work behavior, and social and technical relations of production (Carlson, 1987). Teachers are implicated in this process through the role they play in sorting students (through grading, tracking, and disciplinary practices), and in indoctrinating students with the ideologies of the dominant class.

Social justice educators tend to agree with this analysis of schooling. Yet, at the same time, they also see themselves as agents of positive social change. Drawing on the work of Paulo Freire (1970), critical pedagogues see the role of teachers – or, rather, teacher-students – as creating with students the conditions for cultivating critical consciousness. They believe that in developing critical consciousness, or awareness of one's reality as an oppressive reality, students are moved to take action to transform the world around them. Thus, for critical pedagogues, teachers play a key role in developing students' critical consciousness and their capacity to challenge the oppressive structures in which they live. This understanding of teachers as agents of social change stands in stark contrast to the understanding of teachers as arms of an oppressive State apparatus. Yet, social justice educators are in many ways tasked with being both. While Freire worked largely in informal educational settings, many social justice educators today work in formal school settings wherein they are complicit in the reproductive functions of schooling. For these teachers, the contradiction between "teachers as agents of the State" and "teachers as agents of social change" remains salient. This tension is made particularly clear in the question of teacher's authority.

From a Marxist perspective, teachers' authority is the authority associated with their positions as agents of the State. As State agents, the function of teachers is to support the reproduction of capitalist relations of exploitation, which they do through instilling in students the ideologies of the dominant class. From this perspective, teachers serve a similar function as police, except that while police maintain the social order through repression, teachers do so through ideology (Althusser, 1971). Thus, teachers draw their authority to teach from a violent and repressive State. It is in reflecting the needs of the State that teachers have traditionally aimed to maintain hierarchical relations of power in the classroom.

In response to this traditional understanding of teacher's authority, critical pedagogues have sought to distinguish between "authority" and "authoritarianism" (Freire & Macedo, 1995). Critical pedagogues see the traditional authority relationship between teacher and students as an important starting point for challenging oppression, given that it is through this relation that students internalize the ruling ideology. Thus, critical pedagogues advocate constructivist pedagogical approaches and non-hierarchical relations of power between teacher and students, arguing that such a "humanizing pedagogy" (Freire, 1970, p. 68) can help demystify social reality and in turn enable students to transform the social order.

From this perspective, critical pedagogues also understand "authority" differently from the traditional understanding. They believe that "authority must be on the side of freedom, not against it" (Freire, 1970, p. 80). As Freire writes,

There is no freedom without authority, but there is also no authority without freedom. All freedom contains the possibility that under special circumstances (and at different existential levels) it may become authority. Freedom and authority cannot be isolated, but must be considered in relationship to each other. Authentic authority is not affirmed as such by a mere transfer of power, but through delegation or in sympathetic adherence. If authority is merely transferred from one group to another, or is imposed upon the majority, it degenerates into authoritarianism. Authority can avoid conflict with freedom only if it is "freedom become-authority"...In the theory of dialogical action, organization requires authority, so it cannot be authoritarian; it requires freedom, so it cannot be licentious. Organization is, rather, a highly educational process in which leaders and people together experience true authority and freedom, which they then seek to establish in society by transforming the reality which mediates them (Freire, 1970, p.178-179).

Here, Freire rejects any form of authority that is imposed, arguing that it constitutes authoritarianism. This includes traditional forms of teachers' authority, which is derived from the power of the State. In fact, Freire critiques teachers for "confus[ing] the authority of knowledge with his or her own professional authority, which she and he sets in opposition to the freedom of the students" (Freire, 1970, p. 73). According to Freire, teachers' professional, or State-sponsored authority, is typically leveraged against students and against the side of freedom.

At the same time, however, Freire doesn't relinquish claims to authority either. Instead, he argues that critical educators have a different claim to authority – the authority of knowledge – that is on the side of freedom. As a Marxist, Freire's claim to the authority of knowledge is based in his understanding of oppression as an "*objective social reality* [that] exists not by chance, but as the product of human action" (Freire, 1970, p. 51). Because he sees oppression as a scientific social reality, rooted in the material conditions of existence, he also argues that education can never be neutral. Instead, the function of education is to uncover the mechanisms of oppression, such that students can gain critical consciousness and transform the world around

them. According to Shaull (1970) in his Foreword to *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, for Freire, education can be

...An instrument that is used to facilitate the integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity to it, or it becomes 'the practice of freedom,' the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world (Shaull, 1970, p.34).

Thus, for Freire, teachers' authority derives not from the State, or from their ability to dominate, but rather, from their ability to illuminate the oppressive features of social reality and thus facilitate the "practice of freedom."

Because Freire understands "freedom" as both a goal and a practice, he also emphasizes the importance of freedom within teacher-student relations. However, Freire is not entirely clear which form of freedom – the cultivation of students' critique of oppression, or the individual freedom and agency of the student – is more important, should the two conflict. On the one hand, Freire asserts that teachers do and should maintain a level of authority that derives from both their breadth and depth of knowledge, and their commitment to freedom. He writes,

What one cannot do in trying to divest of authoritarianism is relinquish one's authority as teacher. In fact, this does not really happen. Teachers maintain a certain level of authority through the depth and breadth of knowledge of the subject matter that they teach. The teacher who claims to be a facilitator and not a teacher is renouncing for reasons unbeknownst to us, the task of teaching (Freire & Macedo, 1995, p. 378).

For Freire, teaching itself involves cultivating in students an explicit critique of oppression, and the teacher's authority is rooted in this commitment to justice. He argues, "I do not think there is real education without direction... [The] facilitator who refuses to convince his or her learners of what he or she thinks is just...ends up helping the power structure" (Freire & Macedo, 1995, p. 378). At the same time, however, in *Pedagogy of Freedom* (1998), Freire also writes that "Whoever wants to become a macho, a racist, or a hater of the lower classes, may of course do so...To know that I must respect the autonomy and the identity of the student demands the kind of practice that is coherent with this knowledge" (Freire, 1998, p. 59-60). Thus, Freire himself is not very clear as to the degree or extent to which teachers have authority to direct students' thinking, particularly when working towards social justice ends. This is because, for Freire, freedom entails both the student's individual freedom to direct their own thinking, and freedom from systems of oppression. Freire does not provide clear guidance as to how teachers should respond should these two ideals conflict.

Critical pedagogues in the Freirean tradition have thus inherited this dilemma. To address it, Henry Giroux and Peter McLaren (1986) have argued in favor of a concept of "emancipatory" authority. They argue that teachers are "bearers of critical knowledge" (p. 225) with a moral and ethical imperative tied to "the more political goal of educating students to take risks...to alter the oppressive conditions in which life is lived" (p. 225). Like Freire, Giroux and McLaren argue that teachers have the political imperative – and thus authority – to challenge oppression in their teaching. At the same time, however, they also argue that emancipatory authority "enable[s] students to engage in critical analysis...to make choices regarding what interests and knowledge claims are most desirable and morally appropriate for living in a just and democratic state" (p. 225). Again, like Freire, Giroux and McLaren argue that teachers should both use a constructivist pedagogical approach that centers students' agency, *and* use their authority to challenge

oppression. They expand upon Freire's work by specifying that teachers should make clear the political and moral referents for the authority they assume in teaching against oppression and in the way they treat students. Yet, they neglect to address what these political and moral referents might be, and how teachers might navigate the tension between the two ideals of making space for students' agency and cultivating their critique of oppression in pedagogic practice.

Poststructuralist feminist pedagogues have also sought to address the problem of authority in relationship to teaching social justice. In drawing on poststructuralist understandings of power, these feminist pedagogues have highlighted the ways by which social justice educators reinscribe existing relations of power through their attempts to mitigate their own authority by using constructivist pedagogies to create less hierarchical classrooms. Frances Maher (1999), for example, has argued that because early advocates of progressive pedagogies, including Herbert Kohl, Jonathan Kozol, and Paulo Freire, have all been men, their use and advocacy of progressive approaches have in reality relied on the authority they garnered through patriarchy. Citing Walkerdine (1992, 1994), Maher (1999) argues that the authority of male progressive educators – patriarchal authority – operates as “a kind of magic” (Maher, 1999, p. 38), which in reality includes “a denial of pain, of oppression, and...of power” (Maher, 1999, p. 46). These assumptions serve to undermine both the agency of the student, and the authority of the teacher (who is typically imagined to be a woman) as “the nurturer facilitates the illusion of autonomy and control by the [student], rendering invisible the power of parenting and teaching” (Maher, 1999, p. 45). Maher thus argues that it is necessary to think about gender and other aspects of difference as forms of unequal power relations, which reframe the grounds for teachers' authority. For Maher, such a reframing also gives the teacher the authority to actively intervene to disrupt power dynamics in the classroom, for it is only in so doing, that a more democratic classroom could be constructed.

Similarly, Carmen Luke (1996) observes that “the dynamics of power, rank, and authority underpinning pedagogical relations are not easily dislodged by theoretical shifts from transmission to emancipatory, or patriarchal to feminist, pedagogy models” (Luke, 1996, p. 283). This is because pedagogy without a locus of authority is both not possible, and not politically desirable. While critical and feminist pedagogues reject power and authority in their efforts to alter pedagogical relations in the classroom, “the institutional embeddedness of feminist pedagogy suggests that there can be no ‘pure’ space outside of power and institutionally authorized authority” (Luke, 1996, p. 293). Moreover, pedagogy without a locus of authority risks deceit, as “embodied difference and differential power access are camouflaged under a false pretense of allegedly equal subject positions” (Luke, 1996, p. 297). According to Luke, critical and feminist pedagogies have depoliticized institutional politics in the classroom by centering the disavowal of teacher authority as key to emancipatory politics. In contrast, Luke argues that teachers must assert their authority in order to mediate power relations in the classroom.

Feminist critiques of pedagogies that aim to be “non-hierarchical” are consistent with findings from empirical studies of classroom authority. For example, in her study of alternative high schools that deliberately eliminated formal authority in the classroom, Ann Swidler (1979) found that traditional forms of authority were replaced by other forms of social control such as the use of charisma and personal leadership, and collective control through the cultivation of group assumptions. These practices reproduced dominant relations of power, as their advantages tended to serve the educated upper-middle class, while their weaknesses tended to harm poorer, less academically advantaged students. Similarly, in her empirical study mapping the functioning of power in various pedagogical sites, Jennifer Gore (1995) found that both “radical” and

“mainstream” sites utilized micro-practices of power that mirrored those of prisons, as demonstrated by Michel Foucault. These mechanisms included the use of surveillance, normalization, exclusion, distribution (of bodies), classification, individualization, totalization, regulation, and control of space, time, knowledge, and the self. Furthermore, Gore found that these techniques of power were also linked to differentiation around class, gender, race/ethnicity, religion, sexuality, age, disability, and language. Gore’s findings illuminate the limitations of altering authority relations in institutional contexts, even when using “radical” pedagogical approaches, including critical, feminist, and anti-racist pedagogies.

Social justice educators have also sought to resolve the question of teachers’ authority in relationship to their social justice goals through more normative means. Bizzell (1991) for example, has argued that if students grant authority to teachers, there is a difference between coercion and persuasion (Bizzell, 1991). Similarly, Applebaum (2009) has claimed that social justice education does not involve imposition because it promotes rather than arrests criticality (Applebaum, 2009). For Applebaum (1999), authority should be based on personal relationships rather than institutional power. However, in making these claims, these authors also elide the very critiques of schooling that they aim to help students understand – the understanding that formal schooling is an arm of State power, and that teachers cannot be separated from that.

This body of scholarship highlights the dilemma social justice educators face in rejecting traditional sources of authority for teaching (the State), while simultaneously seeking to retain some degree of authority in order to advance their social justice goals in the classroom. In rejecting the State as a source of authority, social justice educators either undermine their own authority, or undermine their own critiques of schooling as a function of State power. In undermining their own authority, social justice educators simply replace one form of social control with another. These new forms of social control – based in charisma, personal leadership, collective control, surveillance, normalization, etc. – continue to reinscribe the very relations of power that social justice educators aim to challenge through their use of constructivist and “non-hierarchical” pedagogical practices. Similarly, in undermining their own critiques of schooling, social justice educators obscure the very systems of power that they aim to illuminate for their students. While scholars have examined the question of teacher’s authority in social justice education at length, much of this literature is theoretical, rather than empirical. Empirical scholarship on teachers’ authority has tended to focus more on how authority is negotiated in the classroom, rather than on explicit social justice goals. This chapter builds on this existing body of literature to examine how social justice educators understood and expressed their own authority, given both their rejection of traditional sources of teachers’ authority, and their investment in guiding students towards particular social justice goals. Additionally, this chapter examines how these non-traditional understandings and articulations of authority impacted teachers’ evaluation of students’ learning, particularly as they related to teachers’ social justice goals.

Data & Methods

This chapter draws primarily from ethnographic data collected from two sections of ED280, taught by Sarah and Tiana. While I taught the third section of the course, the data from my section is analyzed in greater depth in the following chapter. This chapter focuses on these two sections for comparative purposes, so as to highlight the distinct strategies Sarah and Tiana

used in navigating the tensions inherent between their democratic and anti-oppressive ideals. My own pedagogical practices looked most similar to Sarah's, as we shared certain assignments, lesson plans, texts, and other teaching resources. In fact, many of Sarah's readings, assignments, and activities were inherited both from my class, as I taught the course for a year prior, and from previous iterations of the course. The critique in this chapter is thus an interrogation of our shared practices, and implicates tensions that arise in my own teaching. While their positionalities varied, both Sarah and Tiana were experienced former high school teachers. All three of us self-identified as critical pedagogues, and held an explicit commitment to social justice, which we saw as central to our work in ED280.

It is also important to note that while Sarah and Tiana taught the same course, their classes drew from notably different student populations. Sarah's class included a majority of white students, and a minority of Asian and Latinx students (and no Black or Native American students). In contrast, Tiana's class included a majority of Black and Latinx students, as these students intentionally enrolled in Tiana's class, as she was one of few Black instructors at Stanley. These differences may shape the findings in this chapter, as students of different positionalities are differentially situated in relationship to larger systems of power, and thus differentially relate to dominant ideologies in knowledge production (Haraway, 2016; Hill Collins, 2000; Takacs, 2003). The relationship between positionality and knowledge production will be further explored in the following chapter. Finally, while the findings in this chapter are representative of some students' experiences in ED280, they are not representative of the entirety of those experiences. Students in both classes described ED280 as a transformative learning experience in relationship to both their ability to imagine different (more democratic) forms of practicing education, and in the development of their critique of oppression. At the same time, the findings below illustrate some of the tensions and contradictions involved in simultaneously attempting to cultivate both these ideals in a formal school setting.

Differing Understandings and Articulations of Authority

In invoking critical pedagogy, instructors of ED280 sought to cultivate students' understanding of and commitment to challenging oppression, while also mitigating hierarchical relations of power between teacher and students. However, in navigating the tension between these two ideals, instructors understood and expressed their authority in different ways, which led to differing means of evaluating student learning. These differences stemmed in part from the history of the course. ED280 was originally designed according to the principles of democratic, participatory, and experiential education, and only later took on a more explicit social justice orientation, as instructors redesigned the course according to the principles of critical pedagogy. While democratic education and critical pedagogy share values around creating a non-hierarchical classroom and centering student agency, critical pedagogy is more explicit in its end goal of cultivating students' "critical consciousness." While Sarah and Tiana shared this goal, they varied in their understanding and practice of democratic education.

Commitment to Explicit Social Justice Goals

Both Sarah and Tiana expressed a clear commitment to cultivating students' explicit understanding of and commitment to challenging oppression. In her syllabus, Sarah describes the basic premise of the course as "Examin[ing] how economic, political, and social forces...shape communities, and, in turn, influence schooling and the distribution of opportunity...[so as to] understand the larger systems of oppression in which schools are embedded." Similarly, Tiana's syllabus describes the course as examining "how public schools have been instrumental in the stratification and sorting of people to fulfill the demands of a capitalist society." Both Sarah and Tiana also named the development of students' critique of oppression as central to their key goals for the course. Sarah, for example, described her goals for students as

Understand[ing] how schooling is a structure that reproduces racial, and economic inequalities. And my goal is for students to care, I want them to feel whatever they need to feel, whether it's angry, or passionate, or excited. I want them to feel a call to action to do something about it, and to not accept it as it is. So, I want them to deconstruct, and question why things are the way they are in relation to education. But I want them to understand that they're part of that, I want them to understand all of our complicity in it. And then hopefully to do something about it.

Similarly, Tiana saw her goals for the course as "heal[ing] and transform[ing] [students] and their communities." As part of this goal, Tiana aimed for students to understand

[race] as a social construct that has lots of power. I want students to recognize the way in which race and class intersect. And the ways in which what it means to be raced often correlates with your social standing in our society. I want students to be able to recognize that and know why, most importantly...[to know] why Black people suffer.

Thus, Sarah and Tiana held similarly strong commitments to developing students' understanding of the mechanisms of oppression, particularly as they've been socially and historically constructed, and particularly in relationship to the analysis of race and class. Both instructors also aimed for students to feel moved to social action through the consciousness they developed in the course.

Sarah's Class: Contradictions in "Democratic" Education

Despite sharing similar goals, however, Sarah and Tiana understood and approached "democratic education" very differently. Rather than being a reflection of their individual teaching styles, these approaches were reflective of Sarah's and Tiana's attempts to navigate the inherent tension involved in simultaneously seeking to cultivate students' commitment to social justice values, while also centering their agency in knowledge construction. While Sarah sought to hold both ideals as important, Tiana unquestionably prioritized students' ideological critique. For example, while both Sarah and Tiana were critical of the idea that "democratic" education was possible, Sarah continued to center "democratic" practices in the course, while Tiana more explicitly centered the development of students' analysis of oppression, even if doing so conflicted with the course's "democratic" ideals. This led to different outcomes for classroom practice and student learning.

Sarah's syllabus explicitly stated that a central "goal of this course is to replace the traditional teacher and student relationship with a more participatory system that aspires toward critical dialogue and equal voice." Invoking the work of Paulo Freire (1970), she saw such

dialogical practice as necessary for prefiguring a more “liberatory” practice of education, different from that found in traditional classrooms, and for transforming authority relations between “teacher” and “student.” Thus, students were given the opportunity to co-construct classroom norms, participate in self- and peer- grading processes, and design their own final course projects. As Sarah described it, the pedagogical approaches that she used in ED280 were participatory, having the students interact as much as possible. Really varying between pairs in small groups, and sometimes full group discussions, and having them think about their own lives to connect to the topic, and then work through the readings together, identify key points, make connections, and then it was all applied.

Within this matrix of practices, lectures were used only rarely.

However, even while Sarah sought to implement more “democratic” practices in the classroom, she was also aware of the limits of such practices. As a result, she was openly critical of – and encouraged her students to be critical of – the very possibility of democratic education. For example, though Sarah believed that dialogue is “actually the strength of the class,” she also noted that “I don’t know how successful dialogue is.” While asking her students to co-construct classroom norms for the purpose of facilitating productive dialogue, Sarah also told her students that “we are going to deconstruct dialogue instead of just assuming that everything with dialogue is great.” Drawing on Elizabeth Ellsworth’s (1989) and Nicholas Burbules’ (2000) critiques of dialogue (which students also read), Sarah told students that

Critical pedagogical and traditional notions of dialogue idealize it as inherently democratic, “liberatory,” and inclusive. But it’s not that simple because we bring oppressive structures in here and reproduce them. These notions of dialogue assume we have a shared goal of unity, but is that really possible in a society founded on settler colonialism and genocide and white supremacy?

Sarah highlighted the limitations of dialogue given the ways by which dialogues are situated within larger systems of power. Sarah also argued that dialogues aren’t neutral. As students worked on constructing classroom agreements, Sarah problematized the idea that “everyone is entitled to their own opinion,” by saying, “Do you prefer black vs. green tea is different than believing that undocumented people aren’t human.” Thus, Sarah believed that dialogue was not neutral and aimed to highlight these critiques of “democratic” education for her students.

At the same time, despite critiquing “democratic education,” Sarah continued to value democratic educational practices because of their centering of student agency, and cohesion with Freirean critiques of “banking” education. Thus, she continued to emphasize it as an important part of the course by centering dialogue as a key pedagogical tool, and incorporating students’ input on a variety of classroom activities, including the grading of their own work. However, in simultaneously critiquing and centering democratic education, students received mixed messages regarding both the importance and boundaries of democratic inquiry in Sarah’s classroom. This dilemma was most salient when Sarah’s attempts to practice “democratic” education came into tension with her critiques of how such practices can reinscribe larger systems of power. At times, her commitment to “democratic” ideals led her to downplay the very critiques of power she aimed to illuminate for her students. At other times, her commitment to social justice ideals led her to downplay the democratic pedagogical practices that she saw as central both to the class, and to the honoring of student agency.

For example, in the scenario above, after telling students that “green vs. black tea” is not the same as “undocumented people aren’t human,” Sarah followed her critique with “Do we ‘yes

and' [that statement] or say that's not ok? What does that mean if I do that as an instructor? I'm just posing questions." In so doing, she turned the idea that "'green vs. black tea' isn't the same as 'undocumented people aren't human,'" into a question up for debate, rather than a principle she was asserting. Thus, Sarah opened up space for more opinions – at the same time that she aimed to assert that not all opinions are worthwhile because some reinscribe dominant power relations. Similarly, in a classroom discussion about creating classroom norms, Sarah told her class that "I don't like using the term 'safe space' because I don't think it's up to me to feel safe. But we have safe space in the agreements because someone wanted to use it." Sarah held a critique of the concept of "safe space" and did not believe it was actually possible to create a "safe space" in a society structured by larger systems of oppression. Thus, she was hesitant to incorporate it as a classroom norm. Yet, despite expressing this critique to her students, Sarah's commitment to creating a democratic classroom led her to ultimately include "safe space" in the classroom agreements since it was proposed by a student. Again, Sarah held a critique of how "democratic" classroom practices tend to reinscribe larger systems of power and expressed this critique to her students. Yet, because of her commitment to democratic education, in this situation, Sarah prioritized democratic ideals over her ideological critique.

Sarah's ambivalence in her practice of "democratic" education reflected the tension she experienced in simultaneously seeking to create less hierarchical teacher-student relations in the classroom *and* express an explicit critique of oppression, which she also aimed to cultivate in her students. While Sarah at times prioritized democratic teaching practices over her ideological critique, at other times, Sarah did the opposite, prioritizing her ideological critique over her democratic commitments. For example, at the beginning of the semester, Sarah had her class read an article entitled "Why Grades are Oppressive" (Wise & Bone, 1989). The article, written by previous students at Stanley University, articulated a vehement critique of grades and the role they play in submitting students to the authority of the teacher. The article then described how a class chose their own grading system in order to take responsibility for their own learning. However, in reflecting on her use of this article in the course, Sarah noted that

We did a discussion and it just felt a little bit fake because it was like... we read that and then I was, okay, so do you guys want to – do you want us to restructure the grade? Do you want to not have grades? I don't know, it just didn't feel that meaningful. I was willing if they wanted to go there, but, I don't know... In some ways, I could see how it could be the most meaningful thing ever because it's so in line with course. At the same time, I just haven't been willing to devote that much time to it. I chose the other content of the course, basically, so, yeah, it's another contradiction, right?

Here, Sarah was confronted with the decision to either invest class time into centering a democratic grading process or focus on other course content – content that developed students' critique of race and racial inequality in schools. In this case, Sarah chose to center the latter. However, because of her commitments to democratic education, she still made space for a discussion regarding the implementation of a more democratic grading process. Yet, Sarah acknowledged that she would rather devote the time necessary to integrate a more democratic grading process into the curriculum to what she considered more important – social justice – course content. As a result, even for Sarah, the process felt "fake," particularly since "you can't abolish [grades] completely" anyway.

There's Only One Correct Answer – The “Social Justice” Answer

The contradictions Sarah both felt and communicated to her students in her practice of “democratic” education impacted both students’ relationship to the course and their understanding of its social justice objectives. This contradiction was rooted in the inherent tension between “democratic” educational practices that limit teacher’s authority and encourage students to direct their own learning, and the social justice ideals of cultivating students’ critique of social inequalities in explicit and particular ways. In navigating this tension, students received contradictory messages regarding both the possibility of democratic practices, and the importance of social justice critique in the course, which in turn led students to see the course as “hypocritical” in its actualization of both goals. This was particularly true for students whose self-directed critical thinking contradicted the course’s social justice objectives.

As a result of this tension, several students expressed that they felt they were being “indoctrinated” with social justice values. This perception clearly contradicted the course’s commitments to the creation of a democratic and non-hierarchical classroom. For some students, this indoctrination operated as the “hidden curriculum” (Apple, 1971) of the course. While Sarah didn’t explicitly tell students that they needed to adhere to certain “social justice” beliefs, and in fact, encouraged them to draw their own conclusions, students reported that it was apparent that some conclusions were more valued in the class than others. According to Peter, a white student, it was clear to him that Sarah “believes strongly in a lot of stuff and would have liked for us to all agree and believe in the same.” He says,

There was a bad thing to be in that class. There was a bad way to be, [and] there was a bad thought to have...Everybody knew what the good was and what the bad was and some people came into the class with the bad thoughts. Not because they’re bad people but just because whatever. They have lived experience and that’s where they’ve got to. Like, what if somebody came into the class who was a total white supremacist? Or a total whatever, sexist or rapist or whatever?...[I think you should] let them speak and share their views so you can re-educate based on a real approach to that person, versus “we already know what racists think,” “we already know what sexists think”...You have to [make space to] let people piss you off sometimes.

Here, Peter observes that even though the class aimed to be “equal” and “democratic” and value students’ self-directed critical thinking, there was a hidden curriculum that made it clear that some thoughts were “good” in the class, while others were “bad.” As Peter put it, “There was a thing you needed to get.” The reality, however, was that there *was* a “thing” you needed to get in the course. In fact, Sarah was very explicit about the course’s social justice commitments even saying that “nothing is neutral...If someone tells you a course is neutral, that just means it aligns with the existing social order.” In response, however, students like Peter felt that “if you’re willing to admit that you’re not neutral, then admit that you can’t really do [democratic education]. Like you can’t achieve what you’re talking about doing...[so] then don’t even bring up the democratic line.” It was in the fact that Sarah aimed to actualize *both* democratic education *and* develop students’ social justice commitments that this contradiction lay. In communicating both these ideals as central to the course, students like Peter came to believe that the course had a “hidden” social justice curriculum that contradicted the course’s *explicit* commitment to students’ self-directed thinking.

This contradiction impacted students’ learning in a number of ways. Students like Jessica, for example, reported feeling pressured into thinking in a certain way, regardless of the

understandings she brought with her from her prior knowledges and experiences. This contradicted the course's commitments to constructivist learning. She says,

there was an ambience that by the end of the class they want me to think about things *this* way...It didn't really matter what exchange I brought to the table...[There was] this expectation by the end of the class that you will understand things in this way...There was already a clearly defined course.

As an example, Jessica remembered wanting to do her final project for the course on free speech and being dissuaded from doing so because it “would give rise to problematic opinions.” However, the free speech project was important to Jessica precisely because it would allow her to highlight libertarian perspectives, and the experiences of conservatives and white students like herself, who she felt were minoritized on Stanley's campus. While this was not true to reality, for Jessica, Sarah's response demonstrated how the course “was very geared towards one specific perspective and with not much room for other perspectives.” For Sarah, however, Jessica's desire to do her final project on free speech represented “ideologies...[that] were serving oppressive ends.” Jessica's desire to do her final project on free speech occurred in the semester immediately following Donald Trump's election, during a political moment in which “alt-right” and publicly recognized white nationalist speakers were being invited to college campuses across the country, including Stanley. In this context, advocates of free speech were in essence defending the rights of these speakers to openly espouse white supremacist views. Though Sarah felt it was important to “us[e] theory to help [students] interpret their own experiences” she also believed that these experiences “don't always lead them to anti-oppressive conclusions.” Because Sarah valued the cultivation of students' social justice critique more than the centering of students' experiences, she placed constraints on Jessica's free speech project (though even then, Sarah's democratic commitments led her not to reject it completely – despite Jessica's critiques, she was ultimately given permission to do her final project on the building of empathy between students of different political ideologies on campus). For Jessica, however, these constraints led her to conclude that her experiences were not valued in the course, and that ED280 was “the most indoctrinating class that I've gone to here [at Stanley University].” This was ironic given that ED280 was designed with far *more* democratic practices in place than the average course on campus. However, because Sarah set the expectation that the course would be “democratic,” students like Jessica expected a degree of individual autonomy that was not actualized in practice, given the other – social justice – commitments of the course. As a result, Jessica found the course to be “indoctrinating.”

As another example, Shreya, a South Asian student, reported that, There was definitely like some level of pushing a certain ideal...If you are basically told to just take everything for what it is, you don't really...you don't struggle with the material and you just memorize these like philosophical ideals and I don't think that's really pushing somebody's thinking. I think that's just making them feel like, when at Stanley, you should be thinking this way. I don't think that's sustainable. Like, if you want people to start having more empathy and not just be able to tolerate other ideals but actually understand them and then want to believe them, you have to do more than just saying “you have to believe in this.” It has to be more of, “well what do you think?” “Why is it that you currently don't believe in this very liberal notion?”

In contrast to Jessica, for Shreya, the problem with “pushing a certain ideal” wasn't the ideal itself, so much as the fact that it prevented students from really being able to struggle with the

material. This in turn denied students the opportunity to “actually understand” and “believe” in the course’s “liberal notion[s],” which made them less likely to agree with the course’s social justice content. Similarly, Margaret, a white student, felt that “I don’t feel like I can disagree so I can’t learn. It’s just a space of passively listening rather than dialoging.” Thus, students found that Sarah’s efforts to simultaneously forefront a “democratic” education that centered students’ self-directed critical thinking *and* cultivate students’ commitment to social justice values, inhibited the development of both ideals.

Not Social Justice Enough

While some students felt that Sarah asserted her authority *too much* to impose her “social justice agenda,” other students (and sometimes even the same students) felt that Sarah didn’t go *far enough* in promoting certain social justice perspectives. According to Maria, a Latinx student with social justice commitments, Sarah was “always coddling [privileged students]... apologizing for how people didn’t notice certain things rather than addressing...privileged student[s]’ problematic statements.” From Maria’s perspective, this occurred in part because Sarah herself was not comfortable asserting her authority (consistent with the values of democratic and some interpretations of critical pedagogy), even if it were to promote social justice ideals. Maria gave an example of a time when a white student in the course made a racially charged statement in response to a video they watched in class. Instead of addressing the statement, Sarah “didn’t really say anything and she kind of just let us talk.” Maria felt that

She could have been a better mediator of that. Because I could see it in a lot of people’s faces that what [the student] had said had hit them the same way it had hit me in like a personal level and there wasn’t really that person to say that’s problematic. “You can’t say that.” We had to say it for ourselves and I felt that it wasn’t our place to say it for ourselves but *someone of authority had to say it too [italics mine]*.

In this situation, Maria expressed that it was important for a person with authority to set boundaries about what could or couldn’t be said in the class, particularly with regard to racially insensitive comments. She believed that Sarah was unable to do this because “She was so worried about stepping on toes...She wanted to equalize everyone and the problem with equalizing everyone is that...[she was unwilling to say] ‘you know what, that’s a really problematic thing to say.’” Maria saw Sarah’s reticence to assert authority as directly tied to Sarah’s efforts to undermine her own authority in order to create a more democratic classroom, particularly as an authority figure whose authority was bolstered by Whiteness. In simultaneously seeking to cultivate both students’ self-directed critical thinking and their commitment to social justice ideals, Sarah was critiqued for both asserting her authority *too much* and for not asserting it *enough* as it related to social justice principles. Reflecting the gendered nature of authority, the double bind that Sarah faced is also analogous to the double bind that women often face in positions of authority (Eagly & Carli, 2018; Jamieson, 1995).

Tiana’s Class: There *Is* a Wrong Analysis

Like Sarah, Tiana was also committed to both democratic education and the cultivation of students' commitment to explicit social justice ideals. However, Tiana was very clear in her prioritization of ideological critique, and communicated this commitment to her students. For Tiana, it was critical for students to understand oppression as an objective social reality. Thus, she was careful to make explicit that certain forms of speech – those that reproduced dominant systems of power – would not be tolerated in her classroom. Efforts to include opportunities for “democratic” engagement were secondary to this goal. In describing democratic education, Tiana says, “I think that sometimes folk interpret [democratic education] and go way too far...And it's just this ‘Well, what do y'all wanna do? What do ya'll think?’ And it's kids who have been schooled, figuratively schooled. Good luck, right? So then, what's the point of you being there [as] the facilitator?” Tiana argued that self-directed learning had its limitations given how students have been “schooled.” For these students, self-directed learning could simply reinscribe students' existing beliefs regarding dominant relationships of power, as these have been instilled in them from the day they started school. Thus, for Tiana, the primary purpose of teaching was to help illuminate social reality, and she was very clear as to which forms of analysis would do so, and which wouldn't. She elaborates:

[When I took ED280 as an undergraduate], it was a lot of like ‘What do you want? What do you think?’ And that was it! No question or challenge until you have people being like ‘Well, when you think about these poor schools, these marginalized communities’- No questioning of what that term [‘marginalized’] means...So if it's a classroom structure that's built on ‘What do you think?’ and that statement comes out, then...I've truly heard this. ‘There's no wrong analysis.’ What?! Right, so then you have to go ‘OK,’ and then people get to take that deficit thinking with them. Or you have people who challenge it being seen as violent or aggressive and those are usually folk of color being like ‘Wait a minute!’

Here, Tiana is explicit in her belief that there is a “right” and a “wrong” analysis, and that it is more important for students to come to the “right” analysis than to direct their own learning, because the “wrong” analysis would allow students to leave the class with deficit understandings of children, particularly children of color. Tiana was also careful to communicate these expectations to her students from the outset. In contrast to Sarah, who on the first day of class, set the expectation that ED280 would be about experimenting with the creation of a “democratic” classroom environment, Tiana set the expectation that only certain types of inquiry (those that help illuminate oppression) would be tolerated in her class, while others would not be. She says,

My goal is for [students] to think a little more before [they] say violent things out loud...We come hard the first week to get all that out. You don't get to say [just] anything here. You need to think about what you're saying. Because that first week a lot of what people have lived and been told comes out. Sometimes I show Sister Souljah or something so people can have a very clear understanding of what kinds of conversations we will tolerate and which ones we won't. And that part, that's NOT very democratic. Like we're not going to come in here and blame people for failure. That won't happen. So if I push back early on, it's to set a culture. And I'll push back in a certain way. My tone will be different so folk will hopefully understand “I need to spend a little more time before I say something.”

Thus, Tiana was very clear in her prioritization of developing students' explicit critique of oppression over “democratic education.” While Sarah sought to balance and prioritize both

ideals which limited their actualization as they came into contradiction, Tiana prioritized the development of students' understanding and critique of oppression, and communicated this commitment to her students.

These commitments were reflected in Tiana's pedagogical practices. Because Tiana valued explicit critique more than "democratic" pedagogical practice, she did not shy away from direct instruction. She explains,

That's why we do a lecture day, where it's like, I'm about to give you this work real quick, right, to set the stage. Because I experienced a lot of violence from my peers when I was in [ED280 as an undergraduate]. And I wasn't even hip to the game then, but I knew as a Black woman, [that the deficit perspectives reproduced in the class] weren't true. I don't follow that [democratic] structure, I think it's really problematic.

Tiana saw lecturing as an important pedagogical tool, given the ways that students' self-directed thinking could reproduce racial violence when students construct knowledge from an environment and consciousness already imbued with racism. Tiana also understood lecturing as being distinct from the "banking" education that social justice educators aimed to avoid. She says,

I think people don't critically understand banking. Banking means that you are instilling information for the purpose of sustaining the status quo. But if you are giving folk certain tools and knowledge – and it's true generosity according to Paulo Freire – in order to disrupt these systems of power...that's what teaching needs to look like sometimes.

Thus, contrary to the values of "democratic" education, Tiana took no issue with the "instilling" of information. Rather, she was more concerned with the types of information that were being instilled. Invoking Freire, she argued that there was a *need* to instill information, tools, and knowledges that disrupt, rather than sustain, larger systems of power, and this was in reality a key part of good teaching.

At the same time, Tiana also incorporated "democratic" teaching methods within her class to the extent possible. Like Sarah, Tiana felt ambivalent about what "democratic education" means within an inherently undemocratic social system. She says,

It's challenging for me what [democratic education] means because I don't think we truly know what something means to be democratic. We live in a so-called "democratic" society but I don't want to follow that model. So, I don't truly know what that means. I don't think we have a model to aspire to.

Yet, Tiana differed from Sarah in how she communicated these understandings to her students. While Sarah acknowledged that democratic education was not possible, she continued to value it as an important ideal, and as a result, students too came to see their self-directed learning as important, and at times, more important, than the course's social justice commitments. In contrast, Tiana was very clear that the development of students' ideological critique was of primary importance. Thus, Tiana designed her class to forefront the cultivation of students' critique of oppression, while incorporating democratic practices where possible. For example, Tiana's class, like Sarah's class, also gave students the opportunity to design and teach their own lessons, and the second class session of each week was always discussion-based. However, unlike Sarah, Tiana never told her students that democratic education would be central to the course, and thus never set this as an expectation. Rather, she simply incorporated democratic practices where possible because, as she put it, "I got to a spiritual place in my teaching in the

past year... where you're working on yourself so you're actually able to hear more and recognize more beauty in others rather than seeing your job as filling empty receptacles." Furthermore, the democratic practices Tiana did utilize were always already grounded in a critique of oppression that she had already supported students in developing through the lecture that occurred during the first class session of each week.

Assessing Student Learning: Grades in Sarah's Class

This chapter does not make the claim that students in Tiana's class learned "more" than students in Sarah's class, or became more committed to social justice as a result of taking the course. In fact, students in both classes reported that ED280 had a significant impact on their thinking, particularly as it related to social justice issues. However, the two classes did vary in how they understood and sought to assess course objectives. While Sarah was more concerned with students' *feelings* about social justice by the end of the course, Tiana was more concerned with students' *content knowledge*. This was reflected in each instructor's approach to assessment. Both instructors required students to write weekly reflection papers on course readings. However, Sarah's class relied largely on students' participation in course dialogues as a means for assessing student learning. In contrast, Tiana's class used more traditional assessment tools, including an essay and midterm exam. The key difference between Sarah's and Tiana's approaches, however, lay not in the types of tools used (that is, this is not to say that traditional assessment tools are more effective than non-traditional assessment tools), but rather, in the clarity of learning objectives and how they were evaluated.

Sarah herself felt ambivalent about how to assess students' learning in the course. Because the course relied heavily on dialogue (despite Sarah's critiques of dialogue), it was difficult to evaluate students' learning, as these dialogues, by definition, did not have a predetermined end point. In defining dialogue, Sarah drew on David Bohm's *On Dialogue*, in which dialogue is described as "some new understanding" that emerges from "meaning flowing among and through" (Bohm, 1996, p.7) any number of people. For Bohm, the difference between "dialogue" and "discussion" is that in a dialogue, "nobody is trying to win" (Bohm, 1996, p.7). Thus, there was no predetermined end goal to dialogue, as dialogue was understood as the shared meaning that arises between participating subjects. Sarah was critical of this definition and also drew from Nicholas Burbules' "The Limits of Dialogue as Critical Pedagogy" to help students deconstruct dialogue and the ways it can be complicit with maintaining existing relationships of power. However, Burbules too critiqued the idea of dialogue as a "unitary, goal-oriented conversation with a discrete purpose and a beginning, middle, and end" (Burbules, 2000, p.263). According to Burbules, such an orientation is problematic because "dialogue is not simply a momentary engagement between two or more people; it is a discursive relation situated against the backdrop of previous relations involving them and the relation of what they are speaking today to the history of those words spoken before them" (Burbules, 2000, p. 263). Burbules saw dialogue as just "a slice of an ongoing communicative relation" (Burbules, 2000, p. 263). Thus, dialogues did not aim to – and in some ways stood in contradiction to – the development of clear learning goals, as learning is understood to be a continuous and open-ended process, in the same way that Freire describes humanization as the process of *becoming*, always unfinished and incomplete (Freire, 1970, p. 84). At the same time, however, Sarah *did* have overarching course goals of facilitating students' understanding of and commitment to social

justice. In drawing on these understandings of dialogue, there existed a tension between Sarah's course goals, and the pedagogical tools she used to meet these goals.

Sarah's ambivalence around her teaching objectives – which were again, the result of her efforts to navigate the tension she experienced in simultaneously seeking to facilitate students' self-directed thinking and their critique of oppression – manifested in a number of ways. For example, at the very outset of the course, when students were designing classroom norms around dialogue, a student asked, "What is the purpose of this class? Is it to just discuss these issues or to actually change these systems of power?" The student sought to understand the purpose and importance of the classroom dialogues that they were being asked to engage in. In response, Sarah said, "We need to decide this together. I can't just tell you what the purpose of our discussion will be." In seeking to create a more democratic classroom space, Sarah thus declined to set a clear objective for classroom dialogues, even while, at other points, she had articulated the social justice commitments of the course. This lack of clarity was reflected in the classroom dialogues themselves. In one class, Sarah had students listen to a podcast about racial segregation in schools, and then asked students to share their reactions to a number of quotes from the podcast. After students shared, Sarah asked for last comments or thoughts then said, "we're not going to tie anything together." She then ended the dialogue with students writing their reflections on the dialogue. Thus, the class session ended without a clear takeaway.

Sarah's ambivalence about learning outcomes was reflected in her approach to assessment as well. As Sarah put it, "I don't care about grades...[I could just] give them all A's.... I ultimately just have them show up and talk to each other, and I don't see how grades influence that." In juggling her dual goals of cultivating students' self-directed thinking and their social justice commitments in a formal school setting, Sarah herself was ambivalent about the criteria by which she felt students *should* be evaluated. On the one hand, in reflecting the institutional requirements of Stanley University, Sarah aimed to use "objective" standards of evaluation. Students' weekly reflection assignments for example, were graded based on the following criteria:

1. Demonstrat[ing] a clear understanding of the readings and the authors' main points.
2. Us[ing] textual evidence to support these points (clear citations)!
3. Synthesiz[ing] texts in relation to each other, from both that week's readings and from previous readings throughout the course.
4. Includ[ing] your own thoughtful analysis and interpretations (supported by evidence).⁷

At the same time, however, Sarah also felt some resistance to simply giving all students A's because "I felt their grade should reflect how much they care about social justice." She asks, "Why should someone who doesn't seem to care that much, and isn't that present get the same grade as someone who's trying really hard and takes [the course's social justice content] really seriously?" Thus, Sarah was concerned with students' *feelings* about social justice issues and wanted that to be a part of how students were assessed, though she also recognized that this was not feasible. She says,

It is hard to measure someone, like, Jamie, to me felt really disconnected. There were times I sat next to her and had to ask her to put away whatever she was doing because it was distracting and had nothing to do with the course. But then in her

⁷ These were also the criteria used in my own class. The analysis offered here of Sarah's classroom, are again, reflective of the challenges and tensions experienced in my own classroom.

endline [reflection], she's saying how she was extremely impacted by the course and it informed her a lot...I was like, "Oh, I thought you were disengaged." Yeah, it is hard to measure, and in the end, I don't know how the stupid points work out...I don't think it's objective or anything. I think it's just something we use to trick ourselves so we feel we have a system.

Thus, Sarah was primarily concerned with how much students *cared* about social justice, which was ultimately not captured in the grading system. The ambivalence Sarah felt in setting and evaluating learning outcomes in the course reflected the tension social justice educators experience in navigating their dual goals of creating a democratic classroom and cultivating students' social justice values. In centering dialogue as the central pedagogical tool in the course, Sarah left learning outcomes open-ended in spite of her goal of cultivating students' explicit understanding of and commitment to challenging oppression. Because of this lack of clarity, learning outcomes were also difficult to evaluate. While Sarah had an official system that took into account students' weekly reading reflections and their reports on their field projects, for Sarah, this system was "just something we use to trick ourselves so we feel we have a system." Thus, grading became a key point of tension in the course that reflected the dilemma Sarah experienced as a result of her dual commitments to democratic education and explicit anti-oppressive critique.

These tensions were reflected in Sarah's efforts to grade students based on their participation in course dialogues, and also reflected the constraints she faced in attempting to create a democratic space within a formal institutional setting. Because of Sarah's dual commitments, she sought to create a space in which *all* students were encouraged to speak. However, in order to do so, Sarah recognized that some students needed to speak less in order for other students to speak more – and that those students who spoke with greatest ease tended to be those who were white and male. Thus, Sarah encouraged these students to "step back" in order to make space for students less inclined to participate – particularly women and people of color – to speak. However, because students received a grade for participation, students described feeling like they didn't get the grade they deserved *because* of being asked to "step back." According to Peter, "I didn't get the participation grade I thought I would get" and this bothered him because "I intentionally didn't always participate in a conversation to allow more space [for other students]." Thus, when Peter did not get the participation grade he expected, he felt that "[being] graded down on participation makes me think that I should have just been talking the whole time. Is that how you get a good participation grade? Like [the instructor] acknowledged and knew that I was sitting there listening to what was going on and knowing I wanted to talk." Similarly, Katherine, a white student, observed that it was difficult to create a space where students were given equitable talk time precisely because "discussion is part of our grade isn't it? Ultimately people are trying to get a good grade in this class." According to Katherine, it "might be a structural thing" because students who spoke with greatest ease were also incentivized into doing so due to the heavy emphasis placed on dialogue and participation as part of one's grade.

Students' confusion regarding grading was exacerbated by Sarah's attempts to democratize the grading process. Though Sarah recognized that it would be difficult to implement a fully democratic grading process within the constraints of the course, she still sought to democratize the grading process by giving students opportunities to participate in self- and peer- grading. For example, students graded their own work and that of their peers in all group assignments. Students also had a say in grading their own participation in the course.

However, “democratizing” the grading process further exacerbated the tension between students’ agency and the social justice objectives of the course, as students were not sure of the degree of agency they had, and how they were being graded. For example, in reflecting on the Community Cooperative Project, the field requirement for the course in which students were asked to design their own projects addressing an educational issue of their choice in partnership with a community organization, Peter remembered being told that “the project is up to you.” However, after meeting with the instructor, he remembered being told to “make sure you do everything exactly this way.” Thus, the project was “presented to the class [as] open ended...[and that] there were no wrong answers. But, there were clearly wrong answers.” Similarly, Charlotte, a white student, expressed that “We felt pressured to perform to what the class instructors wanted, rather than what we were interested in. Like we were being graded on producing a ‘perfect’ project rather than one we truly wanted to explore.” As a result, students received the impression that “this was up to us and we could do it the way we wanted” but later realized that “[there was] going to be strict grading in the end...It’s just not critical pedagogy.” Thus, the course’s attempts to democratize the grading process led students to believe that they would have greater agency than they were ultimately granted in shaping course content. Moreover, it led students to see the centering of their agency as the key to critical pedagogy, without connecting this theory of agency to critical pedagogy’s larger goals of social justice and transformation. As a result, students reported that the course was not practicing critical pedagogy when they saw their self-directed thinking being inhibited. Students’ frustration reflected the tension within critical pedagogy itself, between its dual goals of highlighting student agency, and cultivating their explicit critique of oppression.

Students also found the course’s contradictory messages regarding grades to be “hypocritical.” As Peter put it,

We talked about how grades themselves are oppressive and can be [coming] from places of privilege and power. So, you would think that after that discussion you could stand up and be like, “I’m going to completely disagree with you or not do this assignment because I disagree with it” and [the instructor] would be like “Congratulations, you understand the point. I have no problem with that.” But, I was fearful to ... Not like I wanted to completely resist everything, but there were times where I was like, “I understand what she wants and so I will do whatever that is.”

In fact, at the beginning of each semester, Sarah intentionally sought to incite students’ rebellion by administering a “pop quiz” on Chapter 2 of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, which critiques “banking” education and outlines Freire’s theory of problem-posing education. This quiz was designed to be unreasonably difficult, with questions that asked students to regurgitate the content of the text. The purpose of the quiz was for students to realize how they have been trained to be passive and obedient, and to encourage them to challenge authority figures more frequently. In light of this experience, Peter’s response is particularly notable, as it demonstrates how students were *implicitly* discouraged from defying the teacher’s authority despite being *explicitly* encouraged to do so. Moreover, when students did try to challenge the authority of the teacher by refusing the course’s social justice content, such divergent thinking was typically discouraged. Jessica, for example, reflected that

I do think in the end my grade did reflect [my being controversial]. I think if I’d gone to the class and I’d agreed with everything, if I had not been so outspoken, if

I followed the rules of what was expected of me and nodded my head...I do actually think that I would have gotten a higher grade than I did.

Though this may not actually be true, Jessica's comment reflects her feeling of discouragement in challenging the course's social justice ideals, and thus the instructor's authority. This is notable given that divergent thinking was central to the course's democratic ethos and commitment to self-directed learning. At the same time, however, Jessica's grades were also reflective of her resistance to and lack of understanding of many of the course's social justice objectives; thus, her grades were consistent with Sarah's social justice goals. The contradiction students expressed regarding the course's grading process again reflects the tension Sarah experienced in simultaneously seeking to create a democratic classroom while holding explicit social justice objectives.

Assessing Student Learning: Grades in Tiana's Class

Tiana's class is suggestive of a different approach to teaching social justice, that is able to center an explicit social justice critique, while also making space for students' self-directed thinking and the creation of a largely student-centered classroom. Because Tiana's class did not make claims to being democratic, Tiana did not encounter many of the contradictions Sarah faced in seeking to prioritize *both* the creation of a democratic classroom *and* the cultivation of students' social justice ideals. Students in Tiana's class did not find the social justice objectives of the course to be hypocritical because those commitments were clear to them from the outset. Moreover, in comparison to other courses they took at the university, students reported that Tiana's class, was in fact, highly democratic. Rather than focusing on students' *feelings* about social justice in the course, Tiana focused more on students' *content knowledge*. This difference in priority made it easier for Tiana to design clear learning objectives for each pedagogical activity, as well as means for evaluating student learning.

In contrast to Sarah's class which centered dialogue as a key pedagogical tool, Tiana explicitly provided students with the social justice analysis that she aimed for them to take away from the class. Thus, Tiana spent the first of the two class sessions each week solely lecturing. The second class session built off of the first day's lecture, with more opportunities for constructivist learning. However, even then, Tiana organized her discussions differently from Sarah's. While both Sarah and Tiana used both approaches, Sarah tended to facilitate more open-ended dialogues, while Tiana's discussions tended to be more structured. For example, in one activity, Tiana had students watch a video in which Sister Souljah gave testimony before Congress in which she delivered a vehement critique of public education in the United States. Tiana then told students to split into groups to answer the question, "Based on your analytic training (not your auntie), from this university...develop a theoretical framework that presents your understanding(s) of Sister Souljah's commentary and its relationship to schooling." In designing this activity, Tiana asked students to develop their analysis of social inequality drawing on academic texts and grounding their arguments in these theories. This design, which focused more on academic analysis than students' personal experiences and reflections (which are typically encouraged in dialogue), provided less space for students to construct opinions based on personal ideologies (which have been produced through dominant ideologies), as these opinions were required to be grounded in academic critique.

Furthermore, in the discussion that ensued, Tiana did not hesitate to push back against students when she disagreed with their social critique. In the conversation that followed, Tiana asked students, “What’s the purpose of school for [people who don’t have enough money to get a degree]?” A student responded, “there is no purpose.” In response, Tiana said, “I disagree, schooling has a purpose for everyone. I want to push you to think on that.” While Sarah often utilized open-ended questions in order to make space for students’ multiple interpretations, Tiana was more explicit about the interpretation she wanted students to develop, and intentionally pushed back on students when their responses did not lead in that direction. Moreover, while Sarah’s use of dialogue, by definition, required open-ended possibilities, Tiana ended her discussions with a closure. In this case, she told students,

Many of you are here despite school...We need to be comfortable and open to access certain truths this semester. Let’s say the purpose of schools is to create workers and to sustain a white supremacist nation, which I agree with all those things. Does that define your identity within those spaces? That’s what I would like you to think about.

Here, Tiana both provides students with her analysis of schooling, and supports students in connecting this analysis to their personal experiences. In the following lesson, which was a lecture, Tiana further elaborated on this analysis by telling students,

Whenever there is violence in white communities someone always says “this isn’t supposed to happen *here*.” Which lets you know there’s a place it’s supposed to happen. Wherever you live, you can tell me where people die. Communities and schools as state-sanctioned cages. Where politicians have signed off on as places where people suffer...Don’t look at that as an accident. There are people in the Department of City Planning who will make decisions about where suffering exists...For folks who are here on accident...I’m a prophet...I can predict how your first year experience will be like based on your high school. Why is that? Because I’m that good? Or because failure in this country is predictable? We know it. And those communities that look the way they do, maybe that is actually part of the purpose of schools...What do schools teach you? If you fail, it’s your fault...This is the place where you learn to accept this is what happens to you... If you’re going into education policy, stop trying to figure out why schools are failing. As my mentor says, schools are not failing, they are doing exactly what they are supposed to do. So, I can save you 10 years of research. There is nothing wrong with schools. It is doing exactly what it is meant to create. There’s something wrong with us for following.

Here, Tiana does not hesitate to provide students with the analysis of schooling that she aimed to cultivate.

Tiana differed from Sarah in her emphasis on academic analysis over dialogue. Yet, Tiana was also careful to tie students’ analysis to their personal experiences. In one exercise, Tiana organized a debate in which she asked students to debate the statement: “Within American schools, poor youth of color are outperformed by their white counterparts simply because they do not work hard enough.” At the end of the debate, it was clear that the team that argued in favor of this statement had won. While this outcome contradicted the course’s objective of challenging meritocratic claims, Tiana’s goal in conducting this exercise was to help students realize how easy it is to make arguments that preserve dominant relations of power – and thus why these arguments often win. Tiana told students,

It makes a lot of sense [why the team contesting this statement] lost. It's all about sustaining the interests and narratives of that [powerful] group. If you lived in this country for more than 10 years you know how to be hateful more than you know how to defend those who suffer...Worry about [the other] side!... You cannot get by on a "you feel me?" approach because those who are in charge who dictate the status quo don't feel you...For some of ya'll this ain't about no damn grade. This is about making sure your mamma's narrative is heard. You write in this class and read in this class as if your life depends on it and for so many of you it does...You get to this point and you cannot defend yourself and your people and your experiences. This semester, the objective is to give you the mouthpiece...I had to learn the tactics of my enemy.

Here, Tiana again emphasized the importance of students being able to develop a strong academic critique to sustain their claims. However, Tiana did not do so simply to strengthen students' academic abilities. Rather, she saw this analysis as critical for students "learning the tactics of the enemy" or being able to speak the language of power. Additionally, Tiana connected this imperative to students' life experiences. For Tiana, it was important for students to learn the language of power in order to both *develop* and *articulate* their social critique, so as to "mak[e] sure your mamma's narrative is heard."

Tiana's pedagogical approaches were also tied to different goals for student learning. While both Sarah and Tiana aimed to develop students' critique of oppression, Sarah was more concerned about how students *felt* about their social justice commitments, while Tiana was more concerned with students' ability to articulate a critical analysis using academic texts and tools. To assess this analysis, Tiana was able to use more "traditional" evaluation tools, such as a midterm that assessed students' learning regarding major concepts in the course. This midterm gave Tiana information about whether and how students understood key course concepts in ways that Sarah had less access to. At the same time, Tiana also democratized the test-taking process by having students collectively come up with the test questions, and collectively creating a class study guide to prepare for the questions. In this way, the process of constructing and preparing for the exam became a key learning tool in and of itself, and the collective nature of the exam minimized the role grades played in stratifying and labeling students. While Tiana had access to students' analysis and critique of social inequalities through these assessment methods, she had less information about students' agreement or disagreement with these analyses, as their feelings about social justice were not of primary focus.

In navigating the relationship between students' self-directed learning and the development of students' social justice analysis, Tiana differed from Sarah in that she chose to prioritize the latter over the former, while Sarah aimed to hold both as valuable. Despite doing so, Tiana was still able to incorporate many democratic practices in her classroom. Like Sarah, Tiana worked with student course assistants who co-taught the class, and had students do "team-teaches" in which students were responsible for designing and carrying out their own lesson plans. While Tiana utilized a more traditional grading system, in which she (and course assistants) provided feedback on all course material, students always had the opportunity to improve their grade, so that the emphasis was placed on growth, rather than evaluation. In fact, in reflecting on the course, Robert, a Black student, commented,

Democratic education is almost comparative to the myth of meritocracy where it's a phrase, it's a cute warming fuzzy phrase, but it's not, it's not a real tangible event.

It doesn't really occur...[Yet] to use democracy in education or in a classroom context, everybody had a voice in this space...We really did practice it.

Robert's expectations of democratic education were nearly the opposite of those of students in Sarah's class. Students in Sarah's class expected democratic education and thus described Sarah's class as not being democratic enough because of those expectations. In contrast, students in Tiana's class had no expectations of – and had their own critiques of – democratic education. And yet, they described Tiana's class as extremely democratic. These examples demonstrate how, in first developing students' critique of oppression through explicit instruction, Tiana was still able to create a democratic and student-centered classroom.

Conclusion

This chapter demonstrates how two social justice educators understood and expressed their authority, given both their rejection of traditional sources of teachers' authority, and their investment in guiding students towards particular social justice goals. In seeking to center *both* democratic educational practices *and* cultivate students' understanding of and commitment to particular social justice values, Sarah at times privileged one goal over the other, and vice versa. In so doing, students received mixed messages regarding both the degree of their agency in the course, and the importance of the social justice commitments Sarah aimed to cultivate. As a result, some students found the course “indoctrinating” and “hypocritical” because they did not experience the degree of agency they hoped to given the course's democratic commitments – while other students felt that the course was not “social justice” *enough*. In contrast, Tiana clearly privileged the development of students' understanding of and commitment to explicit social justice values over the use of “democratic” pedagogical practices. Thus, she set clear boundaries regarding the types of speech permissible in her class, and did not hesitate to push back on students when their interpretations of course material did not align with her social justice commitments. At the same time, whenever possible, Tiana continued to integrate democratic teaching practices into her classroom, encouraging students to teach their own lesson plans (just like Sarah's class), and having students collectively develop midterm exam questions. In response, students in Tiana's class reported the class to be extremely democratic, even while this wasn't Tiana's primary objective.

Sarah and Tiana also evaluated and expressed their goals for student learning differently. Because Sarah's class focused on dialogue, it was difficult to assess student learning because dialogues by definition did not have pre-determined objectives or end points. These dialogues were also shaped by the structural constraints of the course, particularly the fact that instructors were required to give grades. Given Sarah's goals of creating a democratic *and* equitable classroom, and students' desire to receive a good grade, students felt they needed to participate in dialogue in order to receive a high participation grade, while also being asked to participate less in order to make space for other voices. Ultimately, Sarah was more concerned about students' *feelings* about social justice by the end of the course, which proved difficult to assess. In contrast, Tiana was more concerned with students' content knowledge, and was thus able to measure students' learning using more traditional assessment tools. The difference between Sarah and Tiana's approaches, however, lay not in the tools used, but in the clarity of end goals, and means for meeting these goals. In focusing on students' content knowledge, Tiana sought to develop students' analytic reasoning and familiarity with academic literature. While academic

literature is certainly fraught with its own biases (Smith, 2012), Tiana's approach pushed students to articulate their reasoning for their opinions by drawing on research and analysis that has already been vetted by various sources. This stood in contrast to dialogue, which, in centering students' experiences and self-directed thinking, created more space for students' own ideologies – ideologies which have been shaped and produced through dominant ideologies – to be voiced. Assessment in Tiana's class was also much more straightforward and observable, as it relied largely on students' written assignments, which were graded by Tiana and her course assistants. In contrast to students in Sarah's class, who found peer- and self-grading to be less within their control, students in Tiana's class found this means of evaluation to be democratic precisely because it was predictable, and students always had the opportunity to improve.

The results of this study should not be read as an evaluation of two teachers' individual practices. Rather, this study demonstrates two different strategies that two different instructors utilized in navigating the tension between cultivating students' self-directed thinking and their understanding of and commitment to explicit social justice values – a tension inherent within critical pedagogy and social justice education. This study finds that in foregrounding a social justice critique *over* democratic commitments, Tiana was better able to set clear learning objectives as it related to her social justice commitments, and design assessments that more clearly evaluated the learning of those objectives. This approach also resulted in students reporting the course to be democratic. In contrast, in seeking to hold both democratic practices *and* social justice commitments as central, students in Sarah's class reported receiving mixed messages regarding both the degree of agency they had in the course, and the importance of social justice commitments in the course as they were implemented in practice. Thus, this study finds that in navigating the tension between their democratic commitments and their social justice values, it is important for social justice educators to foreground their social justice critique. Educational theory has already demonstrated the limits of democratic educational practices in a society that is inherently undemocratic, and structured by larger systems of oppression (Gore, 1995; Luke, 1996). In foregrounding their social justice commitments, social justice educators may better facilitate students' knowledge of – and thus commitment to – challenging social inequalities, while still integrating democratic practices in their classrooms. In fact, scholars have already demonstrated how such clarity in learning objectives and methods better supports the learning of students of color and low-income students – and thus contributes to the creation of a *more* democratic society (Delpit, 1995).

Another key finding of this chapter is the importance of contextualizing even “radical” pedagogical practices. Many of the challenges that Sarah experienced stemmed from her efforts to actualize the central goals of Freirean pedagogy – the cultivation of both students' self-directed thinking and their explicit critique of oppression – in a formal school setting with a very different population of students than those with whom Freire worked. While Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* articulated a theory of political education for the *oppressed*, Sarah taught at Stanley University, one of the most prestigious universities in the country, with students who largely held positionalities of relative privilege, even if solely by virtue of their standing at Stanley. Questions of authority thus looked very different for students who have been socialized into relative privilege rather than oppression. Moreover, Tiana may not have faced this challenge as saliently given that the majority of her students were students of color.

These findings demonstrate how the question of teacher's authority must look different in different contexts, and with different students. In working with illiterate peasants in neocolonial Brazil, Freire's notion of centering the experiences and voices of the oppressed was critical to his

theory of social change. However, when applied to an institutional setting with students of relative privilege, the centering of students' experiences and voices became the equivalent of centering the ideologies and biases that these students brought with them – ones that largely reinscribed larger systems of power. In such a context, “democratic” pedagogical practices served to legitimize rather than challenge such perspectives, thus mystifying rather than clarifying social relations in the classroom. As Tiana's example shows, in privileged contexts, it can be particularly important for teachers to leverage their authority to mediate power relationships in the classroom and place boundaries on speech and actions that reproduce larger systems of power.

Thus, this study elucidates the contradictions involved in using democratic pedagogical practices to teach social justice. Scholars have long recognized the tension within social justice education between encouraging students to think “critically” in the sense of thinking for themselves, and to think “critically” in the sense of arriving at particular, anti-oppressive conclusions. Despite this paradox, most social justice educators continue to value both in their practice. However, few scholars have examined how students respond to social justice educators' attempts to navigate this tension in practice. By demonstrating how these ideals may compromise each other, these findings suggest that a more explicit teaching approach may better facilitate teachers' social justice goals. In so doing, teachers may better demystify, rather than obfuscate, power relations in the classroom, and thus cultivate both students' social justice and democratic commitments.

Chapter 6

Experience, Knowledge Construction, and Ideology: Dilemmas in the use of Constructivism to Teach Social Justice

Introduction

This chapter examines how students interpreted and invoked their experiences in ED280, given the course's commitment to using constructivist pedagogical approaches to developing students' understanding of and commitment to challenging oppression in an environment structured by relations of oppression (Fanon 1952; Woodson, 1933). I find that while experience illuminated some students' understandings of oppression, for many others, it served instead to justify and thus reproduce, students' prior ideologies. Furthermore, because students occupied multiple, contradicting positionalities, the experiences from which they constructed knowledge were also contradictory and partial, leading them to complex and conflicting interpretations of dominant ideologies. In ED280, these tensions were exacerbated by students' positionalities as Stanley University students. While most students in the course occupied positionalities of both privilege and oppression, their privileged social location and experiences as Stanley University students played a defining role in their understanding and critique of dominant ideologies, in ways that contradicted instructors' social justice goals. These findings are significant given that social justice education typically advocates the use of constructivist pedagogical approaches to facilitate students' understanding of and commitment to social justice. In demonstrating the challenges of doing so in an ideologically structured environment, this chapter pushes teacher educators to consider the affordances and limitations of the practices they use to teach social justice.

Complicating the Relationship between Experience and Knowledge Production

Scholars have long debated the relationship between experience, knowledge construction, and ideology. Foundational to this debate is Dewey's (1938) claim that students learn by building upon their prior experiences, preconceptions, and knowledges. Dewey believed that experience – the interaction of a living being with its physical and social environment – is the means by which organisms adapt to their environments, and is thus fundamental to the role of education in mediating the self-society relationship (Paringer, 1990). Dewey's belief in the relational nature of knowledge and experience may be considered ahead of its time for its critique of positivist notions of "truth" (Vorsino, 2015), and its foreshadowing of feminist standpoint theory (Seigfried, 2002). At the same time, however, Dewey also believed that society, and the individual's relationship to society, are both fundamentally harmonious. Thus, his theory of education elided the impact of ideology, power relations, and oppression on knowledge construction (Seigfried, 2002; Weiler, 2006).

In contrast, while feminist scholars, like Dewey, agree on the importance of personal experience as a source of knowledge, they are particularly concerned with how one's social position within larger relations of power impacts the production of knowledge. While Freire too was concerned with these power relationships, he paid less attention to the relationship between

power and knowledge production itself. In advocating a constructivist pedagogical approach for illuminating oppressive social relations, Freire understood the oppressed as a uniform group, and elided the reality that even the oppressed construct knowledge from an environment and consciousness already imbued with oppression, as Fanon (1952) has noted. In contrast, feminist scholars reject claims to universality, arguing that there is no such thing as culture-free or value-free knowledge production (Harding & Norberg, 2005), for such claims typically reflect and reify the ideologies of dominant groups. Rather, they argue that all knowledge is “situated” (Hill Collins, 2000; Noddings, 1998), produced by positioned actors working in and between all kinds of social locations and relationships that are often shifting and contradictory (Ellsworth, 1989).

By highlighting the ways by which knowledge construction is mediated by one’s social location within larger relations of power, feminist theory has also illuminated the problems with relying on experience as a source of knowledge. As Kathleen Weiler (1991) has observed, experiences are often contradictory: an individual can experience oppression in one sphere, while being privileged and/or oppressive in another (p. 450). Furthermore, women’s experiences of their lives are not necessarily the same as feminist knowledge of women’s lives (Harding, 1991), and appeals to “women’s experience” tend to homogenize “woman” as a universal and “natural” category (Grant, 1987; Hennessy, 1993).

To address these contradictions, Joan Scott (1991) questions the use of “experience” as a source of uncontested evidence in her essay, “The Evidence of Experience.” She argues that the very “selves” that “have” experiences are constituted through discursive practices. In assuming that there is a pre-existing subject, experience “operates within an ideological construction that not only makes individuals the starting point of knowledge, but that also naturalizes categories such as man, woman, black, white, heterosexual, and homosexual by treating them as given characteristics of individuals” (Scott, 1991, p. 782). Thus, evidence from experience tends to reproduce rather than contest given ideological systems. Because experience is always already an interpretation, and thus both contested and political, Scott argues that analysis should focus on the production of knowledge itself.

Hennessy (1993) takes a Gramscian approach to the same concern. Like Scott, Hennessy argues that women’s lives are always ideologically constructed. However, while Gramsci argued that the working class experiences “contradictory [class] consciousness” that includes both the ideologies of the dominant class, and “its own conception of the world” (Gramsci, 1971, p. 326-327), Hennessy observes that women also experience contradictions in their lived experience given their positioning across multiple relations of power (Hennessy, 1993, p. 24-25). These contradictions are embedded and contested in the ways of making sense available to them in any historical moment.

Thus, the relationship between experience, knowledge construction, and ideology lies at the heart of a long-standing debate within education. While Dewey developed a theory of knowledge construction through experience, he neglected the ways by which ideological hegemony – and students’ internalization of it – can impact students’ ability to construct anti-oppressive conclusions from their experiences. While Freire’s work accounts for ideological hegemony, Freire assumes that students are one-dimensional subjects who can be easily categorized as an “oppressed” or “oppressor.” In reality, however, students construct knowledge from an environment structured by multiple relations of oppression. As a result, the experiences from which they construct knowledge are often complex and contradictory, which can lead them to take up and critique dominant ideologies in complex and contradictory ways. Though Scott and Hennessy take different theoretical approaches, both highlight the ideological and

contradictory nature of experience. In so doing, their work provides a useful framework for examining how people interpret their experiences, especially as they are shaped through two layers of contradictions – the contradictions in people’s consciousness as the result of ideological hegemony, and the contradictions that arise as a result of being socially positioned across multiple nodes of power.

Thus, constructivists are faced with the problem of how to construct anti-oppressive knowledges from experience when students interpret their experiences through dominant ideologies. This chapter provides an empirical analysis of the different ways students interpreted and invoked their experiences in an undergraduate teacher education course that sought to use a constructivist pedagogical approach to develop students’ anti-oppressive critique. In particular, this chapter examines how students’ interpretation of their experiences, given their multiple and contradicting positionalities, impacted their understanding and critique of dominant ideologies. Though students were able to develop a critique of larger systems of oppression through course content, this study finds that they often invoked their experiences in ways that reproduced or justified dominant ideologies, despite these critiques. Given that most social justice pedagogical approaches advocate a constructivist pedagogical approach to learning (Adams, Bell, Goodman, & Joshi, 2016; Hackman, 2005), these findings are significant for they demonstrate the limitations of such approaches for teaching against oppression.

Data & Methods

In contrast to the previous chapter, this chapter focuses on data collected from my and Sarah’s sections of ED280. These two sections were selected for analysis because they best exemplify the dilemmas involved in using constructivist pedagogical approaches to teach social justice. As described in the previous chapter, Tiana’s section relied on a mix of both constructivist practices and explicit instruction; her section decentered constructivist practices which are the focus of this chapter.

Teaching Social Justice

As described in previous chapters, ED280 sought to cultivate students’ understanding of and commitment to challenging oppression, while using a constructivist pedagogical approach that centered students’ experiences. According to the syllabus, the premise of ED280 “is that in order to understand issues related to schooling, we must also understand the larger systems of oppression in which schools are embedded.” At the same time, the course also sought to “replace the traditional teacher and student relationship with a more democratically structured system that is conducive to critical dialogue and equal voices... where we are all students and teachers in the learning process and in the co-construction of knowledge.”

ED280 used a number of curricular and pedagogical approaches to realize both goals. In addition to reading *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, students were exposed to different theoretical approaches – including Marxist, critical race, and feminist frameworks – for understanding oppression. Instructors also assigned readings about key contemporary issues in education, including articles on neoliberal education reform and the school-to-prison pipeline, to help students understand the role schools play in reproducing existing social inequalities. At the same

time, instructors also sought to encourage students' self-directed construction of knowledge. Within each class discussion, instructors designed a variety of activities to help students connect the theories and educational issues covered by the curriculum to their own experiences. These included writing prompts in which students connected course material to their own experiences, dialogue circles in which students shared their experiences with topics addressed in the course, and discussion activities that were designed to illuminate different perspectives on the readings based on students' prior knowledge and experiences.

For some students, particularly students with direct experience with the issues discussed in the course, the use of a constructivist pedagogical approach did indeed help illuminate the mechanisms of oppression. According to Pedro, a Latinx student,

In ED280 I was able to relate every week's [material] to my life in some way. It wasn't just learning facts that didn't apply to me that I just needed to learn because of the subject that I wanted to learn... I learned so much about my history and about me as a person and my culture and the way I was brought up in the public educational system... Through that class I was able to acknowledge like "Oh my God, that happened to me." Whenever I read something I was like, "Oh, I remember in 5th grade or 3rd grade in elementary school when I lived through this. This has happened to me." That's one of the key things that I left taking with me from that class is just knowing a lot about my history and my life within the public educational system... Like I've never talked about race or oppression as much as we did in ED280.

Similarly, as an undocumented Latinx student, Cristina found the course to be "humanizing" because it drew on her prior experiences as undocumented and gave her the opportunity to work with an undocumented student group for her final project. Cristina felt that "I can connect" because of the time spent in class "understanding oppression and white supremacy." Likewise, Anabel, another Latinx student shared that "that was one of the best things about this class. All of my contributions to this course was based on my own unique life experiences. I have a lot of stories that I wanted to share... I feel that because I was personally affected by some of these issues, I made more of an effort to engage." Thus, for students like Pedro, Cristina, and Anabel, a constructivist pedagogical approach enabled them to draw on their experiences and relate to the course material in ways that helped them better understand the mechanisms of oppression both in their own lives and in society at large.

Other students also benefited from learning from their peers' experiences, particularly when they did not have direct personal experience with the issues discussed in the course.

Katherine, a white student, for example, explained that

In this class, we had people of different races, classes, sexual orientations, genders, etc. and because of that we all have different backgrounds. My favorite aspect of this class was the ability to share personal stories. That's what made all of the readings and all of the theory come to life, and for me, made them seem real and relevant. I now see more than ever the effect that race and class can have on the type of education one receives but also the effect that everything surrounding one's identity can have on the type of education one receives. The readings surrounding this idea were interesting. However, what really enlightened me were the dialogues we had.

Similarly, Kyra, a mixed-race white and Asian student, shared that

At the risk of sounding terribly, terribly ignorant and naïve, I admit that I had no

idea that the undocumented student population was so large, or really that they even existed, and that they faced so many barriers and fears every day. This realization came from the readings and the work that the CCP groups were doing, but also a huge part from the personal anecdotes that our classmates/course assistants shared. It was such an impactful “lesson” because the stories shared were so personal and I could humanize these “undocumented students” and genuinely realize that that is not something that should define them.

Though these students did not have personal experience with these issues, the course afforded them opportunities to hear about and learn from the experiences of their classmates. While this was beneficial for these students, it also came at the expense of many students of color feeling like they had to “teach” their white peers about their experiences in ways that felt extractive of those experiences. Thus, while the course’s constructivist approach allowed for some students to construct knowledge from their experiences, and for other students to learn from those experiences, the learning of this latter group of students depended on direct instruction from their peers (*teaching* about their experiences), and also came at the expense of those peers. Though this critique won’t be the highlight of this chapter and has been explored in other writing (Tien, 2017), it points to some of the limitations of using constructivist approaches to teach social justice, as students differentially benefit from such practices.

Stanley University Students and Capitalist Ideologies

Instead, this chapter focuses on the dilemma that arises when constructivist practices don’t lead students to the social justice conclusions that teachers advocate. While, as demonstrated above, experience at times supported students’ understanding of course material, at other times, reflection on experience led students to conclusions that contradicted ED280’s social justice objectives, and reinscribed dominant ideologies. This is perhaps best illustrated through ED280’s attempts to use a constructivist pedagogical approach to facilitate students’ analysis and critique of ideologies that uphold capitalism – notably, meritocracy, credentialism, and social mobility – which were core learning objectives of the course.

Meritocracy is the belief that individuals achieve success as the result of their own talents, rather than as the result of their social position within hierarchical relations of power. Meritocracy asserts that regardless of social position, everyone has an equal chance of becoming “successful” through individual merit and hard work. “Failure” to do so is thus the consequence of an individual’s or social group’s lack of effort (Au, 2016). Thus, “meritocracy operates as the root justification for structural educational inequality” (Au, 2016, p. 41). Meritocracy is also closely related to its twin ideologies of credentialism and social mobility. As Karabel (1972) writes, “A meritocratic society is also a credentialist society; it requires certification in the form of grades, diplomas, test scores and the like” (p.42). Likewise, credentialism is strongly linked to ideas around social mobility. As Themelis (2008) states, there is an “assumption [that] entails that the holders of high educational qualifications earn more money in the labour market than their counterparts with fewer or lower titles or with no titles at all” (p. 431). This assumption is also supported by empirical evidence (Wolf, 2002). Thus, Illich (1971) saw credentialism as a key means by which schools perpetuate social stratification and inequality.

For these reasons, ED280 sought to cultivate students’ understanding of meritocracy, credentialism, and social mobility as key ideologies that uphold capitalist relations of oppression

and exploitation. The course sought to support students in understanding how social mobility is not possible for all people given the hierarchical stratification inherent to capitalism (Bowles & Gintis, 1977), and to see how the valorization of social mobility further advanced stratification through the pursuit of education as a private, rather than public, good (Labaree, 1997). Because of the course's foundation in critical pedagogy, the course also aimed to cultivate students' commitment to an anti-capitalist politic that prioritized the collective good over the individual's.

While students developed such a critique through course content – particularly, reading and reflection on assigned texts – in reflecting on their own experiences, they argued that these critiques were largely inapplicable to their own lives. This finding is significant for it demonstrates how students' reflection on their experiences and positionalities as students at Stanley University impacted their construction of knowledge.

Though students in ED280 occupied multiple, diverse positionalities, they also occupied a positionality of relative privilege simply by virtue of being Stanley University students. For many students, this positionality of relative privilege stood in contradiction to their other experiences. As a public university, Stanley University is well-known for recruiting working-class and immigrant students and providing them with the social and cultural capital to achieve social mobility. However, despite occupying multiple, contradicting positionalities, students' positionalities as Stanley University students also held a particular salience in shaping their experiences and leading them to a particular understanding of class mobility that contradicted the instructors' (and students' own) social justice ideals. This outcome was true for students regardless of their class background, and is a reflection of the ways by which students' experiences at Stanley were produced through an ideologically structured system. As a result, reflection on those experiences served to reproduce meritocratic and credentialist claims, even while ED280's course content aimed to dispel them.

Notably, students developed a nuanced critique of meritocracy that aligned with the instructors' goals through reading and textual analysis. It was only *after* reflecting on their own experiences that students arrived at conclusions that contradicted those claims. For example, as part of the course, students read excerpts from Bowles and Gintis' *Schooling in Capitalist America*, in which the authors challenge meritocratic claims by demonstrating how the association between length of education and economic success cannot be accounted for in terms of students' cognitive achievements. Students were then asked to write written reflections on this text. In their responses, students unanimously agreed that the American Dream is not achievable for most people, and that ideals around meritocracy serve to uphold the fallacy that it is. For example, Richard described meritocracy as a

Semi-permeable membrane between class divisions that [prevents] pressure from building up by allowing a few selected members from the lower caste into the upper rings of society. It is semi-permeable [in that it] is highly selective as it only allows those who best support this system through... Those who are able to be let through will serve as "models" for how one can move up and thus serve to control the masses in the lower areas. They are given hope to cling on to, which prevents them from revolting because they are given the mindset that "if my neighbor who is in the same position as me can do it, so can I." They will then try their best to conform to and fuel this system rather than fight it because they want to also succeed like their peers.

Similarly, Rosa argued that

School is as just, equal, and equitable as the State and the system it perpetuates (not very much). It doesn't allow for an equitable ground for meritocracy and thus the "American Dream" is only achievable for a few...It is no secret that people from a historically disadvantaged history don't "succeed" in the system as much as those from a more advantageous group (Bowles & Gintis, 1977, p. 29). The idea and the myth of the "American Dream" is to entice people with the mere idea of it, to work hard, and to not question the system of things.

Even Li Ahn, an international student from China who self-identified as being "very comfortable being part of capitalist society" wrote that

What naturally follows from this ideology [of meritocracy] is that those who do not succeed owe the failure to their own lack of effort. Such belief, however, does not reflect the social reality of America. Since there is a wide gap among different social classes' access to economic resources, educational resources and job opportunities, people hardly start from the same starting line, while they are expected to reach the same destination with equal effort. Despite the irrelevance of such a belief, it does serve to justify the existent inequality in society by attributing it to individuals' sloth and, eventually, protect the institution that creates this inequality...I believe that as long as education is still an integrated part of capitalist society, it is inevitable that an ideology that justifies Capitalism should permeate education.

Thus, textual analysis – a pedagogical approach that drew from an explicit critique of meritocracy *rather* than students' experiences – enabled students to understand how notions of meritocracy serve to reproduce social and economic inequalities.

Ironically, it was in reflecting on their own experiences that students arrived at very different conclusions. For example, Li Ahn described herself as coming from a background where

I definitely belong[ed] to the group of people who are privileged. Both my parents have graduate degrees and they started their own company and studied abroad...At least 10 or 20 of my primary school classmates came to America or other Western countries which means I probably came from a pretty well-off community...some of my friends are literally billionaires.

In reflecting on these experiences, Li Ahn produced a very different analysis than she did in her response to Bowles and Gintis' text. In her reading response, Li Ahn described how meritocracy blames individuals for problems that are in fact rooted in social and economic inequalities. In contrast, in reflecting on her own experiences, Li Ahn argued that "as long as I work hard enough, I can show you that I'm capable and there's nothing that can stop me...if one starts from a more disadvantaged place, he or she only needs to work harder to get to the top." At the same time, Li Ahn also recognized that her perspective could be biased precisely because of her experiences of relative wealth. She says, "Sometimes I can't even believe in my own perspective because my perspective is based on my own experience. But my own experience may be statistically biased." Growing up in financial comfort, Li Ahn says that one of her biggest takeaways from the class was "realiz[ing] how life might actually be truly difficult for people who are born into poverty. Like it's truly difficult for them to improve their lives because of the social stigma and the actual economic difficulty and lack of support in a nation like America." Having never experienced poverty, Li Ahn found it difficult to relate to – and even believe – experiences not her own. Still, Li Ahn felt resentful of "the American students who self-identify

as victims of the system and look at me as the person who benefits off their misery,” and concluded that “from my life experience, I disagree with a lot of the course material.” While Li Ahn articulated a critique of meritocracy that aligned with the instructors’ social justice goals through reading and written analysis, she arrived at opposite conclusions when reflecting on her own experiences.

Because of their positionalities as Stanley students, even those who came from far less privileged backgrounds also experienced contradictory consciousness in reflecting on their experiences in relationship to the course material. For example, like Li Ahn, Rosa, a queer, Latinx, low-income student, also produced a clear critique of meritocracy in her reading analysis, describing it as a mechanism for maintaining social inequality by giving people motivation to “work hard” and “not question the system of things.” Unlike Li Ahn, however, Rosa was also actively committed to principles of social justice. She says, “I don’t want to perpetuate systems of oppression in my daily life. I want to be conscious of my actions and how they impact the people around me...I want to help people as much as I can, in big or small ways depending on my limitations.” Yet, at the same time, Rosa felt that “Even though ideally we shouldn’t be complacent with the oppression and dehumanization of others, it doesn’t make sense to me that we should eternally be unhappy and troubled. It seems kind of selfish...but there’s only so much one person can do.” Despite having a strong critique of meritocracy, and actively wanting to challenge oppression, Rosa felt that “there are some things we just don’t have the power and strength to do.” Specifically, in connecting the course material critiquing capitalism to her own experiences, Rosa felt that

I want to be the kind of person who permits themselves to be happy.... Again, this might be selfish, and maybe we all have a responsibility to go against systems of oppression and subjugation, but I don’t know if I can always follow the right moral compass. I know that it’s messed up, but what can you do when you’re just trying to survive out there in the real world? It’s going to be hard to do the right thing sometimes and I can’t promise I will always follow through with that. I don’t think I can, and I know that this is just perpetuating the systems that bring us down, but sometimes you got to let the game win to live to fight another day. I think this goes for all kinds of systems of oppression, patriarchy, colonialism, white supremacy, and colonialism. I think the hardest one to go against is capitalism, since it’s the only one that I benefit from directly. It’s the social mobility perspective. It’s just so ingrained in me, and I want to live a comfortable life with financial stability even though that’s doing nothing to fight against oppression, and I know that it’s a shared sentiment among others. It’s hard to give that up, even though you know how fucked up the system is. Where’s my integrity? I can’t answer that yet with what I just said other than I never promised to be perfect.

Though Rosa recognized that all systems of oppression – and capitalism in particular – are harmful, she felt unable to challenge these systems given both the need to survive and the desire to live comfortably. Moreover, Rosa reached this conclusion through her interpretation of her own life experiences. She says, “I don’t want to be bitter about what happened in the past, I want to live my life without the burdens of the past because there’s so much weight to carry that I don’t think I want to carry it along with me.” In reflecting on her own experiences, Rosa recognized that her desire to attain social mobility was the product of having internalized dominant ideologies around capitalism – and yet reported being unable to disengage from her investments in these ideologies. In addition to describing this desire as “ingrained,” she

concludes that “some people are just not willing to give up their privilege, and hey, I understand that, it’s hard sometimes, and I am not either in some situations.” Like Li Ahn, Rosa was able to recognize how dominant ideologies that perpetuate capitalism – particularly, meritocracy – serve to reproduce social and economic inequalities through reading and writing analysis. However, in thinking about capitalism in relationship to her own experiences, Rosa felt that there was nothing she could, or was willing, to do to challenge it as a working-class student striving to attain social mobility, and now, finally, benefiting from it.

Negotiating Credentialism and Social Mobility at an Elite Public University

In fact, for many students, it was precisely their experiences at Stanley University that reinforced their beliefs around dominant capitalist ideologies – notably, credentialism and social mobility, in addition to meritocracy – such that they reported feeling unable to change their behaviors around these beliefs even if they disagreed with them in theory. This phenomenon was demonstrated by an artificial “pop quiz” that instructors of ED280 assigned to help students become aware of the ways by which they’ve internalized notions of meritocracy and credentialism, and thus, obedience. In this exercise, students first read chapter 2 of Paulo Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. In this text, Freire critiques the “banking” model of education, in which teachers “deposit” knowledge into students, describing it as an instrument of oppression. In assigning this text, instructors of ED280 hoped to cultivate students’ willingness to challenge hierarchical institutions of power, such as schools, and the people who bear power within them, such as teachers.

Immediately after assigning this reading, instructors of ED280 surprised students with a pop quiz in which students were asked to answer a number of short answer questions regarding Freire’s text. Questions were intentionally designed to require rote memorization and thus provoke student resistance, given the quiz’s hypocrisy. For example, one question in the quiz read: “Finish the following sentence: “Whereas banking education anesthetizes and inhibits creative power, problem-posing education _____.” Another question read: “What two things necessitate that education be an ongoing activity?” Instead of protesting or resisting the quiz, students completed it silently and assiduously. After only 5 minutes, the instructor asked students to put their pencils down, and informed them that the quiz was a farce.

The pop quiz exercise demonstrated the extent to which students at Stanley have internalized schooling. In reflecting on this activity, Naomi, a Latinx student, noted just “how *ingrained* things like [banking education] are because I didn’t question it at all.” Though Naomi wondered “why are we doing this?,” she also felt “too busy thinking, okay, I need to *get a good outcome on the test*.” She concludes that in such an environment, “you’re not really thinking critically. You’re just trying to, you know, get those numbers and get those words on the paper.” Similarly, in reflecting on the quiz, Cristina, another Latinx student, remembers, “I just did it because you’re just like *programmed* to do it since elementary school...like it’s a pop quiz and you don’t question the teacher....It didn’t occur to me that I could be like ‘no, I’m not taking it.’” Thus, through the pop quiz, students came to recognize the degree to which they’ve consented to obey authority figures in the service of credentialism and the attainment of social mobility.

In spite of this realization, however, students did not feel like they could do anything differently. Carol, a white student, explained, “If you think of it from a psychological standpoint, the classical conditioning that had to have gone on for years so as soon as we saw the word

'quiz,' almost everybody immediately felt anxiety...but if the alternative is to get a zero, it's not a real choice [whether or not to take the quiz]." Antonia, a Latinx student, agreed that it was an excellent exercise because it really challenged me to think, like, we are learning all these things, but now we are just being hypocrites doing what we are talking about is bad....[Protesting the quiz could] only happen in our class. I could never do that in another class...if I were to walk out of an exam, then I'd fail.

Students recognized that their investment in grades and continued obedience to the teacher was "hypocritical" given their understanding of the role schools (and thus grades, credentials, and obedience) played in reproducing social inequalities, particularly those produced by capitalism. They aptly demonstrated their grasp of this understanding through their critiques of meritocracy, as illustrated earlier. However, despite this critique, and their recognition of the role banking education plays in inhibiting independent thinking, students remained invested in their grades as a result of the larger context and environment in which they were situated at Stanley University.

This occurred in part because students saw their grades as directly tied to their credentialist aspirations for social mobility, which were constantly reinforced by their experiences within the social context of Stanley University. In Stanley's elite and academically competitive environment, students' experiences were marked by "everyday...listen[ing] to my teachers and stress[ing] about finding a job or internship ...The system pressures me and students to have something to put on your resume for the summer or to get a full-time job after graduation." In such an environment, "everyone's looking out for themselves, and they're trying to move up. Everyone's just trying to graduate and move up in society. Even though we know it's wrong, we do it anyways, because we're just looking out for ourselves." Thus, students internalized the belief that it is important to "build a successful, fulfilling career through the system" and that it was more worthwhile to "focus on getting good grades and charting a path to elite grad schools...rather than spend my time trying to challenge myself and learn."

Furthermore, through their experiences at Stanley, students learned that there are negative repercussions to not following these rules. According to Peter, "Speaking for myself, I know that I generally follow what is asked of me in school/class because I don't want to face the repercussions of doing something wrong. For example, even though I don't necessarily agree with grades I still do all my work for this class." This fear of repercussion impacted students' willingness to challenge the status quo.

As a result, students learned to fear the consequences of any form of resistance. One student argued that "going against the system will backfire...I feel that I am afraid to risk my future because what I do in the future affects my family and friends, and I don't want to be a burden to them." This fear was particularly salient for students of color such as Maribel, who "fear[ed] what my family will think." However, even a student who identified as having "upper middle-class parents and some financial security" worried that having financial security was "not enough, because it can be taken away at any time." Students felt that they didn't "know how to actively go against the systems that oppress me and my people without losing the ways I use to survive."

Moreover, students felt that they had little agency in relating to credentialism and the quest for social mobility any differently. According to Carol, "it's not really a choice, when the alternative is homelessness. Are you really able to consent to having to work [and thus go to school]?" Similarly, Navina, a South Asian student, asked, "Do we really want to be at Stanley University? It's a hard place to be. But we know if we choose to drop out, what's the alternative? I can't really change my community or do anything if I don't have the money or resources. So,

we consent to be in higher education, but it's all about the alternative." For Maria, "the two choices suck, and you choose one, and that's basically what consent and coercion is in American society." Despite being very critical of meritocracy in their reading responses, in thinking about capitalist ideologies in relationship to their own experiences, students concluded that it would be "too much of a sacrifice to dedicate my time and effort towards activism for others...it would be hard not to jump for opportunities presented to me." Though students believed that "getting a job and security [is being] part of the oppressor," they also sought to "build a successful, fulfilling career through the system." Thus, students recognized how their investment in capitalist ideologies served to uphold the dominant social order; at the same time, they also consented to this system, reporting that they lacked other options. Students drew these conclusions as a result of interpreting their experiences through the larger social context in which they were situated – one that consistently rewarded meritocratic and credentialist aspirations and relayed the message that there are no alternatives. These narratives are dominant within capitalist society at large, but were particularly reinforced within Stanley's elite and competitive school culture, as Stanley itself was uniquely invested in seeing itself as a vehicle of social mobility, as one of the premier public universities in the country.

These findings demonstrate how students experienced contradictory consciousness specifically in relation to their positionalities as Stanley University students. Because their experiences were produced through dominant ideologies – which were amplified by the meritocratic and credentialist claims salient at Stanley – in constructing knowledge from their experiences, students learned to become invested in social mobility in ways that contradicted their own values and the social justice ideals of the course. Moreover, these findings demonstrate how, in analyzing and critiquing dominant ideologies, students navigate a contradictory consciousness that is the product of the contradictions inherent within capitalism. For students at Stanley University, this was particularly salient, as they received the message that class mobility was feasible for them in a way that social mobility with regard to their other social positions may not be. Thus, students across class backgrounds and social positionalities reported feeling invested in meritocratic and credentialist claims despite their own analyses which demonstrated their understanding of how these claims also serve to reproduce social inequalities. Furthermore, these findings illustrate how the ideological function of schooling impacted students' abilities to think independently and direct their own learning. While Stanley University claimed to cultivate students' self-directed critical thinking as part of its educational mission, it also created a social and environmental context that inhibited students' self-directed thinking through its reproduction of dominant ideologies. This finding thus illuminates some of the limitations involved in using a constructivist pedagogical approach to develop students' understanding and critique of dominant ideologies when students construct knowledge from an environment and consciousness already shaped by and produced through ideological hegemony. This contradiction is particularly salient for educators seeking to teach social justice in formal educational institutions, for these institutions, by function, play a central role in maintaining dominant ideologies, and thus reproducing hierarchical relations of power.

Legitimizing Dominant Ideologies through Constructivism

While meritocratic and credentialist claims uniquely demonstrate the ideological function of Stanley University because of students' investment in these claims across social

positionalities and class backgrounds, another key learning objective in ED280 was the development of students' understanding and critique of white supremacy as an oppressive social system. However, in using a constructivist pedagogical approach to teach about racism, reflection on students' experiences at times served more to justify students' preexisting ideologies, rather than to support them in constructing new knowledges. While this wasn't true for all students, it was particularly salient for students who expressed resistance to the course's anti-racist goals. This section analyzes three strategies used by three different students to invoke experience as a means to minimize or distance themselves from Whiteness or from responsibility to social justice.

Jessica

Jessica was a student who openly contested many of the course's social justice assumptions. In taking to heart ED280's claim that "personal experience was most important," Jessica also critiqued the way constructivism was used in the class, arguing that "personal experience was the most important [thing]... [But] as a white person I don't have that level of experience; I'm not feeling oppressed because of my race. [So,] I didn't feel like my opinion and perspective and things were as valuable." She elaborated, "For example, if I said I've been having kind of a hard time on this campus because I feel like people are really criticizing me because I'm white, then I'm met with like, 'Oh, that's just too bad.' Like the oppressor is treated differently... Like I said, I didn't feel like my experiences were valued at least."

Jessica's comment points to two dilemmas that occur in the use of constructivism to teach social justice. On the one hand, Jessica argued that because she didn't experience racial oppression, she was unable to construct knowledge from her experiences in order to understand racism. This statement is reflective of the challenges involved in constructing knowledge from experience when one interprets experience through dominant ideologies. Standpoint theorists have argued that the experiences of marginalized groups may indeed better illuminate the mechanisms of oppression than those of dominant groups. At the same time, however, Jessica has also experienced white supremacy as a result of living in a racialized society. As Leonardo (2002) argues, because the logics of race and Whiteness are hegemonic, all people – including white people – have knowledge about race as a result of living in a racialized society. However, rather than acknowledging how she experienced white supremacy as a beneficiary rather than a victim, Jessica claimed that she did not have experience with white supremacy "as a white person." In this situation, reflection on experience served more as a means for Jessica to claim lack of knowledge about racism, than as a means for her to construct knowledge about it.

At the same time, because of the course's emphasis on a constructivist approach to learning, Jessica felt that her experiences were less valued in the class than they should be. She says,

It didn't really matter what exchange I brought to the table...[It's] not going to change anything about the outcome of the class. If it were really based on experiences then I don't think that things would have gone the same way... It was like the experiences were taken into account, the experiences were valued, but the experiences were only valued if they fell in line with the course.

In response, Jessica sought to uplift her experiences and that of other conservative – and mostly white – students in her final project for the class. This project – which she designed in

collaboration with a group of other students who held a variety of political perspectives – aimed to “introduc[e] empathy into [Stanley’s] political atmosphere, through explanations of individuals’ personal backgrounds rather than simply their political ideology.” They hoped that

Through identifying a means to instill empathy, it would be possible to make dialogue productive, allowing students of differing political ideologies to identify common ground, and work toward acknowledging inequalities and oppression in society...To do this, we had to target the root of the problem: an inability to communicate.

Despite the course’s efforts to develop students’ understanding of the systemic nature of oppression, Jessica and her groupmates identified a failure of dialogue and the inability to understand others’ life experiences as the root of social inequalities. Furthermore, this analysis was actually supported by the course’s emphasis on constructivist learning. In fact, Jessica and her team invoked both Freire and his constructivist method of education in their efforts to uplift the voices of conservatives on campus. In addition to wanting to promote understanding and empathy around these students’ “personal backgrounds,” Jessica and her team also identified the experiences of these students with those of the oppressed. In applying *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* to their project, Jessica’s team wrote,

Freire claims that “oppression of a group takes away the humanity of each individual,” and the suffering of an oppressed group are seen as things, rather than people. He states that this unjust system of power engenders violence in the oppressors, “which in turn dehumanizes the oppressed” (Freire, 1970, p.45). Thus, in this system, the oppressors have vast amounts of power over the oppressed. Freire is clear that only the oppressed themselves can bring about a change, which must be done through productive dialogue and self-realization, so that the oppressed do not evolve into the oppressors. This, Freire states, will liberate the oppressed and oppressors from the system entirely, forming an entirely new organism that fosters collaboration and collective discussion. This relates to our project in that conservatives on this campus see themselves as victims of an oppressive system, and feel helpless against the power systems at play (it is worth noting that we ourselves do not necessarily believe this, but are noting common conservative attitudes as observed in our project). We want to do as Freire points out, and try to find out why power was unevenly distributed, and then in turn, help create new structures that would solve power imbalances.

Due to ED280’s commitment to constructivist learning, Jessica’s group was encouraged to apply Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* to their own life experiences in a vastly different context from the one in which Freire worked. This resulted in a lack of clarity regarding *what* oppression is and *who* is oppressed. In applying *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* to their own experiences, Jessica’s group took at face value conservative claims of being “oppressed” on Stanley’s campus. While the students were careful to note that they did not necessarily agree with these claims, their project sought to justify these claims and give them greater voice. In appropriating Freire’s work, these students saw their project as amplifying a minoritized experience on campus. In reality, however, their work legitimized the perspectives of students who, for the most part, were the beneficiaries of the very systems of oppression that Freire sought to dismantle. In applying Freire’s theory of education in a vastly different context with students of relative privilege, it was easy to invoke Freire’s emphasis on dialogue and the centering of

experience to reproduce and justify dominant ideologies, in contradiction to the goal of Freire's work.

Tyler

While Jessica drew on the course's constructivist emphasis to amplify conservative voices on campus, other students like Tyler, leveraged the course's focus on experience as a means to distance themselves from Whiteness. Tyler self-identified as an upper middle-class, gay, Ashkenazi Jew, and frequently referenced the historic persecution and discrimination experienced by Jews to support his views. For Tyler, "[being] a Jewish person informs so much...being an Israeli informs my whole life, it's really central...Not a day goes by that my heritage and stuff doesn't impact the way I'm feeling, in the way I deal with the realm of social justice." In understanding his positionality as "a person...[whose] ancestral experience [includes] colonization, imperialism, genocide, [and] consistent persecution," Tyler claimed that his experience being oppressed as a Jewish person informed his understanding of social justice. However, Tyler himself has never experienced the impact of colonization, imperialism, genocide and persecution as a Jewish person; rather, his own personal experience as a Jewish person has been one of relative privilege. But, the course's constructivist approach enabled Tyler to conflate experience with identity, and in claiming Jewish identity, Tyler aimed to distance himself from both Whiteness and from commitments to social justice. He says, "I think that a majority of students of color...don't see me as a person of color and see me as purely white...[but] I am a person who is indigenous to a place...and I feel like my ethnic group's heritage is really invalidated in that sense." Tyler's statement draws attention to the socially constructed and fluid nature of race – after all, Jews have not always been considered "white." However, scholars have argued that because many Jews achieved success because of white racism, Jews were brought into the fold of Whiteness in the post-World War II era (Brodkin, 1998). More importantly, here, Tyler leveraged the complex and contradictory history of Jewish experience in order to distance himself from Whiteness. He said,

For me, I don't fit neatly, at least in the American context, into any one group. I don't personally identify as white. I recognize and appreciate my white privilege and I don't ever deny that. But I don't see myself as white and I don't see myself as included in that history as being like a regular American or a regular white person.

In distancing himself from Whiteness, Tyler actually reinforced Whiteness, as Knowles, Lowery, Chow, & Unzueta (2014) have demonstrated how distancing strengthens Whites' underestimation of, and thus inaction with respect to, intergroup disparities. This became particularly evident as Tyler used his position as a "non-white" Jew to defend Zionism and justify his lack of involvement in social justice movements. In a discussion about "free speech" inspired by recent protests against white supremacist agitators on Stanley University's campus, Tyler claimed that

For me there's a certain feeling of "Well, you don't fit in," in terms of social justice. "What you're going through isn't really valid." "You're just privileged." It creates a lot of hurt but also a lot of resentment because I love social justice, it's great and we need it, but it just turns me off... Jews are ignored and often targeted in very difficult critical ways [in social justice circles] and so it just makes you feel very

excluded. This idea of like this liberal social justice, I don't feel like I'm part of that justice...I don't feel like I'm really welcomed... Or welcomed in one sense but not a full sense welcomed...like "We love your religion, we welcome you as a Jew but no, we don't like Israelis"... Just like you say, you can't speak from a perspective unless you've experienced it.

Here, Tyler explicitly conflates experience and identity – claiming group experience as personal experience – in order to position himself as a victim. Moreover, it was the course's constructivist pedagogical approach that encouraged Tyler to invoke the history of Jewish experience as personal experience and thus frame himself as a victim to distance himself from Whiteness and from responsibility to social justice. As with Jessica, experience – now conflated with identity – became a justification for Tyler's pre-existing ideologies.

Janet

While a constructivist pedagogical approach created opportunities for white students to distance themselves from Whiteness, it also served as a barrier for students who came from positionalities of both relative privilege and oppression to access the course's critique of racial oppression. Janet, for example, self-identified as a lower middle-class Asian-American student. In connecting the course material to her own life experiences, she concluded that much of the content addressing educational inequality and oppression did not impact her. She says,

I don't really think about [race] at all in [my life]. In school, there was never any issue revolving around my race. Mostly, I think, because places that I would go to, or would frequently be around, there were a lot of people there who were my own race... The community that I was in, that set of people didn't just, like, attack people for their race and things like that. In my workplace now, it's the same thing. No one is ever attacking someone because of their race and there are also people who I can relate to in terms of my race. So, it's never really been too much of an issue for me.

As an example, Janet argues that in her internship program, "there isn't like a whole thing around [race]...It was actually a lot more people who were minorities than people who were not minorities." For Janet, race was largely a problem of the past, as it was something that "while it hasn't affected me personally, it might have affected my family...[because] my family *worked really hard* to make sure my siblings and I were able to be in an area where we can get a decent amount of education." Thus, personal reflection led Janet to draw on meritocratic claims to conclude that race has not significantly impacted her life, even while it may have historically impacted that of her family's.

At the same time, however, Janet also claimed that the course helped her realize how, "in reality, [racism] hasn't really changed that much. It's just kind of hidden in different areas, it's not like as direct anymore. I kind of learned that race is definitely still affecting American society a lot pretty much everywhere." She also acknowledged that "I'm more part of the minority. I'm part of the groups that felt like we're dominated a lot by [Whiteness]." Notably, though Janet didn't feel that race personally impacted her, she did believe that Asian Americans as a whole "in a way still are [oppressed]." She says,

I think there are slowly starting to be some changes but like in terms of getting more Asian Americans within certain areas of society, I guess it's still kind of difficult...[But] I don't think that specifically Asian Americans are being

oppressed. They are, but as part of a larger group. Like, I think minorities as a whole are still being oppressed.

These statements reflect the ambivalence Janet felt in learning about racial oppression through ED280's constructivist pedagogical approach. On the one hand, Janet felt that because "I'm a minority, I would feel for that side more than I would feel for the oppressors." At the same time, however, in actually reflecting on her own life experiences in relationship to the course material, Janet found that race really "hasn't affected me personally directly" and this made her less "likely to really fight for it, really go out and strike and protest or anything like that, until it becomes something that either affects me and my family." The contradictory consciousness Janet experienced is reflective of the challenges involved in using a constructivist pedagogical approach to illuminate the mechanisms of racial oppression, particularly when students come from multiple, contradicting positionalities that include both privilege and oppression. While Janet acknowledged that racial oppression continued to be a salient feature of American life for all minority groups, including Asian Americans, she did not see this impacting her own personal experiences. Thus, for Janet, a constructivist pedagogical approach served to cast doubt on the continued relevance of racial oppression, rather than confirming its salience, thus minimizing the racial critique that ED280 sought to cultivate, in contradiction to the course's goals.

Conclusion

Scholars and educators have long advocated constructivist pedagogical approaches as a means for teaching social justice. While some researchers have highlighted the theoretical contradictions involved in simultaneously encouraging students to think for themselves, and encouraging students to think in particular ways (that align with teachers' social justice goals), few have examined how these tensions manifest in practice. This chapter does so by examining how students' interpretations of their experiences, given their multiple and contradicting positionalities, impacted their understanding and critique of dominant ideologies in an undergraduate course at an elite public university, that sought to use constructivist pedagogical practices to cultivate students' understanding of and commitment to challenging oppression.

Findings illustrate how a constructivist pedagogical approach led students to make sense of dominant ideologies in complex and contradictory ways. In particular, because students' experiences were already shaped by and produced through dominant ideologies, their interpretations of their experiences led them to justify pre-existing ideologies rather than constructing new knowledges. This was particularly salient with regard to students' shared social positions as Stanley University students. Students' positionalities as Stanley University students significantly impacted their understanding of and commitment to challenging oppression. Ironically, in contrast to ED280's social justice ideals, students' experiences at Stanley University led them to become invested in class mobility in ways that contradicted both their own critiques of capitalist ideologies, and their own values. These findings are significant for they illustrate how students experience contradictory consciousness as the result of the contradictions inherent within capitalist schooling. As in the previous chapter, this finding confirms how it may be particularly difficult to use a constructivist pedagogical approach to teach social justice within formal educational institutions – particularly elite ones – as these institutions are tasked with maintaining capitalist relations of reproduction (Bowles & Gintis, 1977). In such institutions, students construct knowledge from an environment that is already

imbued with dominant ideologies, and thus internalize these ideologies in ways that may inhibit their ability to construct anti-oppressive conclusions from their experiences.

In addition to their positionalities as Stanley University students, students also held other, multiple, contradictory positionalities. These positionalities impacted the ways by which students made sense of ED280's anti-racist curriculum. Findings demonstrate how reflection on experiences alone was insufficient for illuminating the mechanisms by which oppression operated. In fact, because of the course's emphasis on constructivist learning, reliance on experience served as a means for justifying and legitimizing students' pre-existing ideologies, and distancing themselves from Whiteness, rather than for constructing new knowledges. For students who experienced both relative privilege and oppression, experience cast doubt on the course's anti-racist critique, as students' own experiences with race did not align with those analyzed in the course. Thus, students' multiple, contradictory positionalities led them to take up and critique dominant ideologies in ways that contradicted teachers' social justice goals.

One of the key assumptions of constructivist education is that individuals make meaning through interaction with their environment, and reflection on their prior knowledges and experiences. The trouble, however, is that these environments and experiences are always already produced through and mediated by dominant ideologies. In ED280, a constructivist pedagogical approach often served to enable students to justify pre-existing ideologies, rather than to construct new knowledges. This finding is significant for it demonstrates the limitations of constructivist pedagogical approaches for illuminating the mechanisms of oppression, and thus, for teaching social justice.

Chapter 7

Teaching Identity vs. Positionality: Dilemmas in Critical and Feminist Pedagogies in Practice

Introduction

In aiming to incite social change, social justice educators and activists often reject dominant notions of authority and truth and turn to experience as the basis for knowledge construction. This focus on experience is central to both feminist and Freirean pedagogy, and point to their shared roots in constructivist ideology. Drawing from constructivism, both critical and feminist pedagogies center experience as a source of knowledge construction, and are particularly concerned with the creation of non-hierarchical classroom relations that honor students' agency.

Despite these similarities, critical and feminist pedagogies also differ in many ways, particularly in their understandings of power. In drawing on the Marxist tradition, critical pedagogy tends to emphasize a more structuralist understanding of power, while feminist pedagogues, in drawing more from the poststructuralist tradition, understand power as capillary and relational. Moreover, while critical and feminist pedagogies share constructivist roots, feminist pedagogues in particular have highlighted the importance of supporting students in understanding their social positions within larger relations of power. At the same time, Freire's concern with the role of the Subject as an agent of change has also invited questions regarding the social position of the Subject, as these positions impact students' relationship to the world and the ways by which they may construct knowledge and make change within it (Breunig, 2005; McLaren, 1991). In general, however, the Marxist tradition has done less to theorize positionality, and these theorizations are often understood through the lens of identity. As I will elaborate later, *positionality* emphasizes the external context in which a Subject is located, the power relationships between Subjects, and how this impacts one's construction of knowledge; *identity*, on the other hand, refers to how one relates to that, and can be considered more as a social category. While both critical and feminist pedagogies are constructivist in origin, in drawing on the Marxist tradition, critical pedagogy tends to emphasize the binary nature of social relations, while feminist pedagogy rejects such a conceptualization, emphasizing fluidity and multiplicity instead. These differences have significant implications for how social justice educators teach students to understand and relate to their social positions within larger relations of power.

However, because of their shared roots in constructivism, critical and feminist pedagogies often look similar in practice, and can easily be conflated, with consequences for student learning. As Cremin (1964) and Kleibard (2004) have noted, various pedagogical and political commitments have long been categorized and conflated under the "progressive education" umbrella. This chapter examines how the mobilization and conflation of analytically distinct concepts – in this case, *identity* and *positionality* as understood in relationship to critical and feminist pedagogies – impacted student learning. As argued in the previous chapter, because of its focus on experience, constructivist pedagogical practices can lead students to conflate group experience (*identity*) with personal experience. This chapter builds on this finding to examine *how* teachers' pedagogical practices – particularly the conflation of *identity* and *positionality* – resulted in these outcomes.

Thus, I examine how teachers teach *positionality* – with students of multiple positionalities – and the impact of this teaching on students’ commitment to social justice. In particular, I examine the conflation of *identity* and *positionality*, and how this affected student learning. In analyzing Sarah’s class, I find that Sarah’s invocation of a Freirean pedagogical framework conflicted with her ability to highlight the socially constructed, multiple, and fluid nature of students’ positionalities. As a result, students developed essentialized notions of identity within an “oppressed/oppressor” framework, even when their own experiences contradicted such binary understandings. Students came to conflate positionality with identity, understanding it as static and fixed, rather than socially constructed and malleable. Ironically, this led students, particularly students from positionalities of relative privilege, to reject the instructor’s call for students to participate in social action, as they understood themselves to be defined by their identities, rather than by their actions. This chapter contributes to the literature in social justice education by: 1) Highlighting how the “religion” (Phillips, 1995) of constructivism can result in the conflation of analytically distinct concepts because they share constructivist values; 2) Demonstrating how the conflation of *identity* and *positionality* results in essentialized notions of identity that impact students’ commitment to social action; and 3) Arguing for a more intentional, historicized, focus on positionality for social justice educators. It is only through understanding both oppression and positionality as socially constructed and thus malleable that students can see themselves as participants in movements for social change.

Critical vs. Feminist Pedagogies, *Identity* vs. *Positionality*

Critical scholars have long debated the nature of oppression, and how best to challenge it through pedagogical practice. Much of this debate stands in relationship to Marx’s analysis of the political economy. While there is a wide range of perspectives within Marxism, in taking a historical materialist approach, most Marxists understand oppression as an objective and scientific social reality that is rooted in the material conditions of existence. Marxists see history as driven by class conflict, which, in the era of capitalism, manifests primarily as the exploitation of the proletariat by the bourgeois. Thus, Marxists tend to advocate a structuralist and totalizing theory of power, in which capitalism is understood as the root of social oppression, and social relations are considered in relationship to the binary and antagonistic interests of these two competing social forces (Cole, 2005). While Marxists and neo-Marxists have increasingly emphasized the complex, multiple, and fluid nature of social identities and relationships (Hall, 1990), Paulo Freire’s work has arguably been most influential for both critical pedagogy and the field of education.

In his landmark work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire argues that humankind’s central problem is the problem of dehumanization, which is the result of an unjust social order. He observes that this situation of oppression is an “*objective social reality* [that] exists not by chance, but as the product of human action” (Freire, 1970, p. 51). In so doing, Freire draws from a Marxist framework in which oppression is understood as both structural and binary. However, in contrast to Marx, Freire takes a more ontological approach in centering the problem of humanization and the relationship between the oppressed/oppressor (in lieu of the bourgeoisie/proletariat). At the same time, however, Freire also recognizes that this objective situation of oppression impacts the subjectivity of the oppressed, as they have “internalized the image of the oppressor” (Freire, 1970, p. 47). He argues that it is only through recognizing

themselves as “hosts” of the oppressor that the oppressed can contribute to a liberating movement. In response, Freire develops a pedagogy by which the oppressed are able to develop “critical consciousness,” awareness of reality as an oppressive social reality, through reflection on their concrete situations of oppression, which leads to social action. In so doing, Freire advocates a constructivist pedagogical approach that centers the subjective and situated knowledges of the oppressed as a means for illuminating the objective nature of oppression.

In this way, Freire’s work aligns well with the perspectives of feminist standpoint theorists. Like Freire, standpoint theorists also draw from the Marxist tradition. Standpoint theorists adapted Marx’s notion that material life not only structures but sets limits on the understanding of social relations, to argue that women have a privileged vantage point for understanding male supremacy (Hartsock, 2004). Like Freire, standpoint theorists believe that knowledge is always “situated,” produced by positioned actors working in and between all kinds of locations and relationships (Haraway, 2016). Black feminists like Patricia Hill Collins (2000) have further expanded standpoint theory to understand the experiences and knowledges of groups who experience multiple forms of oppression, such as Black women. At the same time, however, standpoint theory has also been critiqued for being essentialist in its belief in a coherent and collective set of group experiences (Harding, 2004). Thus, though standpoint theorists have done much to theorize *positionality*, their work is often understood through the lens of *identity*, precisely because of their belief in the possibility of a group consciousness.

These claims have provoked debates within feminist scholarship. While some feminists – including many standpoint theorists – have favored “identity politics” that affirm group identities, poststructuralist scholars have critiqued both Freire and identitarians for failing to recognize the shifting, multiple, and unstable nature of subjectivity (Ellsworth, 1989; Weiler, 2001). Scholars who favor identity politics argue that without appealing to group categories, it would be impossible to make political demands on behalf of a group. For these feminists, the problem with identity politics is not that it fails to transcend difference, but that it often conflates or ignores intragroup differences (Crenshaw, 1993; Hill Collins, 2000). Thus, rather than deconstructing social categories, they see identity politics as useful for social empowerment and coalition building. In drawing on standpoint theory and providing a materialist analysis of difference, some feminists have also argued that identity politics align well with a Marxist analysis (Alcoff, 2006). In contrast, poststructuralist scholars like Judith Butler (1991) believe that all identity categories “tend to be instruments of regulatory regimes, whether as the normalizing categories of oppressive structures or as the rallying points for a liberatory contestation of that very oppression” (p. 637). They believe that identity categories use the same discourses as, and thus reinscribe, the very socially constructed categories they aim to contest. In response, poststructuralists seek to deconstruct all identity categories and problematize subjectivity itself; for poststructuralists, identity is always a production, unstable and under contestation (Butler & Weed, 2011).

Both positions have their limitations. On the one hand, identity politics’ inclination towards essentialism threatens to naturalize difference and reproduce dominant cultural assumptions. On the other hand, the idea that “gender” or “race” are fictions threatens to invisibilize difference altogether, along with the power relationships that create it (Alcoff, 1988, 2006). As bell hooks (1990) has observed, few Black scholars engage with poststructuralist or postmodern theory, precisely because of this threat of erasure. In contrast, however, hooks (hooks, 1990; hooks & Hall, 2018) advocates greater engagement with anti-essentialism, for she argues, such critiques can make space for the affirmation of multiple Black identities and

experiences, and open new possibilities for the construction of the self and the assertion of agency.

In fact, many scholars in recent years have sought to resolve the tension between Marxism and poststructuralism. Many women of color postcolonial scholars, for example, have aimed to synthesize the two positions by aligning themselves with an anti-essentialist politics, while keeping their work grounded in an analysis of the political economy (Kaplan & Grewal, 1999; Spivak, 2006). In fact, postcolonial scholars Kaplan and Grewal (1999) have argued that transnational feminist cultural studies has transformed these traditional divides by mediating between Marxism and feminism via poststructuralism. Neo-marxists like Michael Apple have also sought to bridge this divide, arguing that “it is by letting these traditions ‘rub against each other’ that progress can be made in more fully understanding classroom interaction” (Collin & Apple, 2015, p.122).

Despite these advances, however, scholars have noted that the tension between the need to affirm and deconstruct group categories remains salient (Alcoff, Hames-García, Mohanty, & Moya, 2006; Hekman, 2013; Lee, 2011; Lloyd, 2005; McCann, 2016; Weir, 2013).⁸ Building off her widely cited 1988 essay, Alcoff (2006) addresses this persistent dilemma by advocating a concept of positionality that recognizes identity both as a social construction and a necessary point of departure. In discussing the problem of using constructs such as “woman,” Alcoff defines *positionality* as the understanding of “woman” through the external context in which that person is situated, rather than by a particular set of attributes. In contrast to the essentialist view of “woman,” which defines her identity through internal attributes independent of her external situation, the positional definition of “woman” understands her social position relative to a constantly shifting context, which includes objective economic conditions, and cultural and political institutions and ideologies. Alcoff argues that by naming women by their position within this network of relations, it is possible to ground a feminist argument for women, not based on innate characteristics, but on their position within external social conditions. In contrast to positionality, Alcoff defines the *identity* of a woman as the product of her own interpretation, as mediated through the cultural discursive context to which she has access. Women are not just passive recipients of an externally defined identity; rather, they actively contribute to how they understand and define their identities. Such definitions clarify the differences between *positionality* and *identity*. *Positionality* enables women to use their positional perspective – rooted in personal and historical experience – as a place from where meaning is constructed rather than a locus of already determined values. Significantly, such an interpretation defines *positionality* according to experiences, discourses, and practices, rather than social categories. *Positionality* refers to a set of processes, rather than a possessive characteristic of individuals; it describes a power relationship, rather than an identity.

In delineating the differences between *positionality* and *identity*, Alcoff further builds on her 1988 work by arguing that a “postpositivist realist” approach can synthesize Marxist and poststructuralist frameworks by drawing on anti-essentialist critiques of identity, while also recognizing that identities are “no less real for being socially and historically situated” (Alcoff & Mohanty, 2006). However, while Alcoff and Mohanty (2006) advocate the use of *identity* as a marker for history, social location, and positionality, I find Alcoff’s (2006) notion of *positionality* to be more powerful in articulating an anti-essentialist politic. This is because, as Alcoff and Mohanty (2006) note, the ways by which *identity* has been taken up in popular

⁸ The full breadth and diversity of feminist thought cannot be addressed in this chapter. Here, I aim only to highlight the major debates in feminist theory for articulating the distinction between *identity* and *positionality*.

discourses make it susceptible to “ideological entrapments” (p.6). Due to its association with a structural analysis of power, *identity* is often understood as a coherent (and thus essentialized) social category in popular discourse, despite scholars’ efforts to de-essentialize the term. In signaling the possibility of fluid and contradictory social locations and power relationships, *positionality*, on the other hand, provides more clarity in defining an anti-essentialist politic that remains grounded in a materialist analysis of experience.

The distinction between these two concepts is significant. In attending to this dilemma, scholars have observed that educators’ efforts to cultivate students’ awareness of their positionalities have tended to result in essentialized notions of identity instead. Sánchez-Casal and Macdonald (2002), for example, have found that efforts to teach students about their social locations often create an “anti-democratic tendency to see experiential claims to know (especially to know about oppression) as sacrosanct” (p.2). This occurs as essentialist assumptions posit a direct correspondence between identity and knowledge construction. Similarly, Donna LeCourt (2004) has found that the languages our culture makes available for understanding the self continually reassert the cultural premise that body = experience = thought. As a result, within public rhetorics and academia itself, identities are not seen as fluid, but unified within particular cultural experiences. This prevents the constitution of hybrid and multiple subjectivities as suggested by poststructural and postcolonial theories (p. 107). This study builds on these observations by illuminating *how* teachers’ pedagogical practices teach students to conflate identity and positionality, and how this impacts students’ understanding of and commitment to social justice.

Critical and Poststructuralist Feminist Pedagogies in Practice

Though they diverge in their understandings of power, critical and poststructuralist feminist pedagogies share much in common. Most significantly, in sharing values around non-hierarchical learning and the primacy of experience, both critical and poststructuralist feminist pedagogies can be considered constructivist. While there are many different interpretations of constructivism, as noted previously, critical and poststructuralist feminist pedagogies align particularly well with the notion of emancipatory constructivism (O’Loughlin, 1995), which sees knowledge construction as dependent on the interaction between the subjectivity of learners and the implicit and explicit power relations of the pedagogical situation.

Yet, critical and poststructuralist feminist pedagogues also diverge in pedagogical strategy. While critical pedagogues have emphasized democratic learning (Apple & Beane, 2007; Edwards, 2010), dialogue (Shor & Freire, 1987; Darder, Mayo, & Paraskeva, 2016), student agency (Hanley, 2011), empowerment (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Love 2013), and voice (Giroux, 1988; McKay, 2010), poststructuralist feminists have critiqued these strategies for their reliance on rationalist and structuralist theories of power that fail to recognize the partial, multiple, and contradictory nature of subjectivity (Ellsworth, 1989). Poststructuralist feminist pedagogues, on the other hand, aim to highlight the provisional, open-ended, and relational nature of knowledge. Thus, they intentionally reject single-strategy pedagogies, claiming instead that there are no finite truths or fail-proof answers (Luke & Gore, 1992; Weiler, 2001). However, as noted earlier, poststructuralist feminist pedagogues have encountered their own problems in practice. In addition to the challenges that arise from emphasizing the open-ended nature of knowledge construction, described in Chapter 5, in utilizing pedagogies of

positionality, which aim to support students in understanding their social locations within larger relations of power, scholars have found that these pedagogies often result in essentialized notions of identity that come into tension with teachers' liberatory goals (LeCourt, 2004; Sánchez-Casal & Macdonald, 2002).

This chapter builds upon existing literature to examine *how* a teacher's pedagogical practices contributed to these outcomes. I find that Sarah's use of critical pedagogy, which understands oppression as structural and binary, came into conflict with her ability to highlight the fluid, multiple, and contradictory nature of positionality. This conflict is significant as both concepts are important to, and widely used within, social justice education. Instead of understanding positionality as a power relationship, students came to understand it as an identity. Students' conflation of positionality with identity significantly impacted their inclination towards social action. Students believed that they were defined by their positionalities (which they interpreted as an identity, or personal characteristic), rather than by their actions. This discouraged students, particularly students from positionalities of relative privilege, from taking social action, in contradiction to the social justice ideals of the course. This case is useful to consider as an example of how one educator navigated this dilemma and of what that meant for her students, with larger implications for social justice educators in general.

Data & Methods

Ethnography was central to this particular chapter as a means to illuminate students' learning in its social context. Though this chapter focuses just on Sarah's classroom, I was intimately familiar with the challenges instructors faced in teaching students to reflect on their positionalities, having taught as a member of the ED280 team for three years. Sarah's course was chosen as the focus of this study because, of course instructors, Sarah was particularly committed to teaching students to reflect on their social positions, and her class thus revealed the challenges involved in doing so with particular clarity. However, the critique in this study is an interrogation of our shared practices, and implicates tensions that arise in my own teaching.

Teaching Social Justice

As described earlier, ED280 aimed to prepare undergraduate teacher education students with a commitment to social justice in their future work as teachers. Thus, Sarah aimed to support students in understanding "how schooling is a *structure* that reproduces racial, and economic inequalities." At the same time, she was also concerned with students' recognition of their social positions because she wanted students "to care...to feel whatever they need to feel, whether it's angry, or passion, or excited...I want them to understand that they're part of that, I want them to understand all of our complicity in it. And then hopefully to do something about it." Because of these commitments, Sarah felt it was important for students to learn "how different identities and positionalit[ies] factor in different structures to influence their educational trajector[ies]" so that students could understand their "complicity" in these social systems and feel moved to take social action. Thus, the course sought to develop both students' understanding of the objective nature of oppression, and their reflection on their own positionalities. Though Sarah conflated *positionality* and *identity*, it was evident that Sarah wanted students to

understand how their social positions within larger *structures* of power impacted their experiences.

The course used a number of curricular and pedagogical approaches to realize these goals. In addition to reading *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, students were exposed to Marxist conceptions of schooling as a site of social, cultural, and economic reproduction. Sarah also assigned readings about key contemporary issues in education, including articles on neoliberal education reform and the school-to-prison pipeline, to help students understand

...how schooling is a structure that reproduces our social order to the advantage of some, and disadvantage of others...[and how race] is a social structure that privileges and benefits white people, and people of color in proximity to Whiteness, at the expense of Black people, and people of color in proximity to Blackness.

Thus, in drawing from Marxism, and structural analyses of racism, Sarah understood oppression – particularly, racial oppression – as an objective social reality that fundamentally structures social relations in a binary and antagonistic way, and sought to convey this understanding to her students.

However, even as Sarah prioritized such a structural analysis of power, she also centered the development of students' awareness of their positionalities. This was particularly important to Sarah because of her concern with how power dynamics would impact classroom dialogue. According to Sarah, dialogue was "the basis of ED280." Sarah was also concerned about students' awareness of their positionalities because of the Community Cooperative Project, which was a requirement for the course. The Community Cooperative Project asked students to design their own project to address an educational issue of their choice, in collaboration with a community-based organization. However, Sarah worried that the Community Cooperative Projects "ultimately serve the students in their own learning and questioning their own assumptions...But at the expense of whatever communities they are involved with." By helping students become more aware of their positionalities, she hoped to "make it so we don't do more harm than good if that's possible" and help students "unlearn their saviorism." Reflection on positionality was also a core tenet of participatory action research, which Sarah used as the framework for students' Community Cooperative Projects.

Thus, for Sarah, it was important for students to understand "how...we engage with difference in terms of our **positionalities** because they are real in terms of how we function in society but also not completely reducing each other to those. Not in a Kumbaya way, but people have complex lives and **identities**." Sarah aimed for students to understand their positionalities as a means of engag[ing] with difference, and also held a critique of how "identity politics...[could be] so reductive." Yet, despite this critique, Sarah often conflated identity and positionality. Here, Sarah states her concern with positionality, but again reverts to identity. As noted earlier, Sarah also conflated the impact of students' "different identities and positionality[ies]" on their educational trajectories. She often named and used the concepts of *identity* and *positionality* interchangeably, saying,

I think that there are a lot of times *our beliefs*, or like *our position* on things come out of our identities but we might not even be aware of it... I think race is bound up in how we think of ourselves... So like our identities influence everything. And a lot of that unlearning or undoing starts with self-reflection and understanding how we came to have the lives that we have and the things that we have.

Here, it would have been more appropriate for Sarah to name *positionality* given her concern with students' beliefs and how the larger social context has influenced these beliefs. As noted

earlier, it is *positionality* that arises from one's experiences and shapes one's construction of knowledge; identity better describes a social category or personal characteristic. However, in this statement, Sarah again reverts to *identity* as a means for making sense of this process. Thus, Sarah herself was not very clear on the differences between *identity* and *positionality*, and invoked the two concepts interchangeably.

It was in part Sarah's Freirean framework that led her to conflate identity and positionality. Sarah wanted students to understand how they were positioned in relationship to larger systems of oppression. However, because Sarah understood oppression through binaries, she ultimately taught her students how to *identify* within these binaries, as opposed to teaching them to reflect on their *positionalities*. Below, I examine two pedagogical practices that cultivated this outcome. I demonstrate how Sarah's efforts to develop students' understanding of oppression as an objective, structural, social reality, came into tension with her ability to illuminate the socially constructed, and thus fluid and contradictory nature of positionality. As a result, students developed essentialist notions of identity, which discouraged them from taking social action to challenge oppression.

The Privilege Walk

Sarah facilitated the Privilege Walk to help students reflect on how they were socially positioned, and how this could impact their participation in classroom dialogue. The Privilege Walk is an activity so commonly used by social justice educators that it was featured in the 2007 blockbuster film, *Freedom Writers*. In utilizing this activity, Sarah wanted students to understand that "dialogue is not neutral" and that it's "not that simple because we bring oppressive structures in here and reproduce them." Thus, Sarah aimed for students to understand how larger systems of power structured their experiences in the classroom. At the same time, she also wanted students to reflect on how they were socially positioned within these systems in ways that could impact their participation.

In the Privilege Walk, Sarah asked students to step forward towards a line taped to the floor if they ever experienced each of the statements she read out loud. Statements included experiences such as:

- English is your first language
- You feel comfortable expressing yourself aloud in class using "academic" language
- Your instructors/professors are generally the same race as you
- Your instructors/professors are generally the same gender as you
- You've never had to be the sole representative of your race in a classroom dialogue

Each statement aimed to reveal how students were socially positioned based on their experiences of privilege or lack thereof. If students had experienced a particular privilege, they stepped forward, and if they hadn't, they stayed in place.

In some ways, the Privilege Walk did indeed create opportunities for students to reflect on their positionalities. This was particularly true for white students. In describing his experience with the Privilege Walk, Peter commented that

This was the first time I realized, not that I am white, but that I get to just be American and not be seen as anything other...I never had to think about [privilege] until I came to this campus, and that to me is the biggest privilege.

Through the activity, Peter came to recognize how his social position as a white American impacted his construction of knowledge and prevented him from seeing certain power dynamics at play until he came to Stanley. Students of color also found the Privilege Walk helpful in reflecting on their positionalities. Viviana, a Latinx student, noted that:

This class has given me access to more information about how race and class work along education to benefit those who it was created for in the first place...The Privilege Walk/Line activity helped me visualize the ways our education system fails people of color.

Through the activity, Viviana came to understand how people of color are positioned in relationship to larger relations of power such as race and class, and how these serve to reproduce social inequalities. Therefore, the exercise helped both white and non-white students reflect on their positionalities to some degree.

Identity = Positionality

However, in constructing privilege as a binary (you either have it, and step up to the line, or you don't, and stay put), the exercise also served to turn privilege from a social position to an identity. As Zeus Leonardo (2004) has observed:

A critical look at white privilege, or the analysis of white racial hegemony, must be complemented by an equally rigorous examination of white supremacy, or the analysis of white racial domination. This is a necessary departure because, although the two processes are related, the conditions of white supremacy make white privilege possible. In order for white racial hegemony to saturate everyday life, it has to be secured by a process of domination, or those acts, decisions, and policies that white subjects perpetrate on people of color. As such, a critical pedagogy of white racial supremacy revolves less around the issue of unearned advantages, or the state of being dominant, and more around direct *processes* that secure domination and the privileges associated with it (p.137).

As Leonardo argues, white racial hegemony is a *process*, a verb. However, in asking students to *identify* with statements of privilege, the Privilege Walk constructed students as *People With Privilege* or *People Without Privilege*, rather than people who have *experienced* particular privileges (in particular social contexts, that could change in different social contexts). Privilege thus became an identity (a noun), rather than a social process or relationship.

As a result, the Privilege Walk also had the unintended impact of homogenizing, rather than complicating group identities. Though the exercise drew from, and asked students to reflect upon their personal experiences, students had prescribed notions about the outcomes of the exercise, as determined by the privileges "People With Privilege" were expected to have. For example, in debriefing the activity with a small group of students, Peter, a white student, mentioned that it would be interesting to see who ends up speaking up during the large group discussion at the end. Then he added, "I mean, I have an idea but..." Laila, a South Asian student, then interjected, "We all already know (referring to white students)." Similarly, in reflecting on the exercise, Samantha, a white student, observed that it turned out how she

expected it to, but it was still good to see. Sarah then asked her to clarify how she expected it to turn out. Samantha responded, “I’ve done it before, and the white people always move forward faster while all the people of color stay behind.” In turning privilege from a *social position* to an *identity*, the Privilege Walk had the effect of cementing social groups with certain essentialized qualities that students took for granted.

Thus, in designing the Privilege Walk, Sarah sought to demonstrate how larger systems of power structured students’ experiences in the classroom. She also wanted students to understand how they were socially positioned within these structures in ways that could impact their participation in classroom dialogue. The Privilege Walk aimed to reach these goals by asking students to identify as “Privileged” or “Not Privileged” according to certain experiences. However, in constructing privileged/not privileged as a binary and a noun, *Privilege* became a homogenous identity, rather than a social position. Though the activity did not create a complete binary with all the white students at the front of the room and all the students of color in the back, through the activity, students developed the assumption that this would be the expected outcome, as evidenced by Samantha’s statement. This occurred as students came to identify as “Privileged” or “Not Privileged” through the repetitive categorization of the exercise. Thus, the Privilege Walk demonstrates how Sarah’s pedagogical approach led students to equate identity and positionality, and to understand both as fixed and essentialized. This phenomenon is further illustrated by Sarah’s next exercise, the Identity Wheel.

The Identity Wheel

Like the Privilege Walk, the Identity Wheel is an activity commonly used by social justice educators to help students reflect on their experiences to deepen their understanding of larger systems of power and their positionalities within them. According to Sarah, she chose to use the Identity Wheel as “kind of like a light way to make people acknowledge their gender identity, their race, their class...[and] how it might influence the way they participate in the class...[especially in classroom] dialogue.” She felt it was important because “for a white student, that might be the first time that they had to even think about their race because someone is absolutely explicitly asking them to identify it.” However, though the purpose of the Identity Wheel was to illuminate students’ social positionings, like the Privilege Walk, it also served to conflate *identity* and *positionality* (as evidenced by Sarah’s own description of the exercise), which ultimately discouraged students from participating in social action.

In introducing the activity, Sarah explained,

Today, we’re going to look at how identities are socially constructed. It’s not something that we asked for, but these identities work through us and we bring them to this class, and they inform our dialogue. So, one thing we can do is be *hyperconscious* of what we are bringing to the world and the way we experience the world and why.

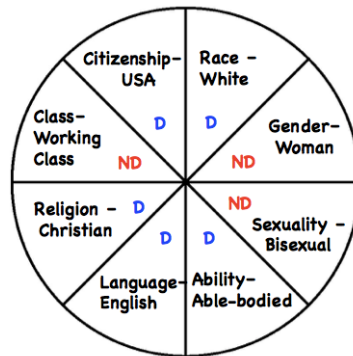
She then asked the class, “What are identity categories that hold differing amounts of power and privilege in our society?”

Students shouted out various identity categories:

- Gender
- Sexuality
- Age

- Race
- Ability
- Class
- Citizenship
- Body type
- Educational level
- Language
- Religion

Sarah then asked students to draw an Identity Wheel – a circle, divided into slices like a pie, in which each slice was labeled with a different identity category, and students’ identification with it. For example, in one slice, a student wrote “Race – White.” Sarah then told students to label each slice of their pie by writing “D” for “dominant” or “ND” for “non-dominant,” to identify whether they held more or less power in society based on how they were positioned within that category. For example, a student’s Identity Wheel could look like the following:



Sarah then asked students to consider: “Do you hold more or less power and resources in society based on that identity?” She then went through each identity category: In the US, what is the dominant group for race? Students answered: *White*. Gender? *Male*. Class? *Upper middle class, college educated or higher*. Sarah then explained, “It doesn’t mean anything is inherently better, but it is about power and systems.” She then told students to think about and write: “Which categories are you more aware of? Less aware of? Why? How, if at all, do you think these identifications may influence your participation in classroom dialogue?” After completing their Identity Wheels, students were encouraged to share their reflections in small groups.

Like the Privilege Walk, the Identity Wheel helped students reflect on their experiences and become more aware of their positionalities. Even more so than the Privilege Walk, however, the Identity Wheel also encouraged students to conflate *identity* and *positionality*, as students were explicitly asked to specify how they *identified*, and then mark how this *positioned* them within society. Instead of focusing on the external social context, and how it shaped one’s positionality (which is malleable), the Identity Wheel led students to understand identity as a fixed category with possessive characteristics. Furthermore, in clearly demarcating between different identity categories, the Identity Wheel encouraged students to understand identity as singular and static, rather than socially constructed and multiple. As a result, it ultimately served to define and limit the scope of possible subject-positions that students felt they could occupy. This occurred as Sarah mapped students’ positionalities onto Freire’s binary framework. In encouraging students to identify with one pole or the other of the Oppressed/Oppressor

(Dominant/Non-dominant) dichotomy, Sarah equated positionality with identity, reducing it to a binary relationship (that exists along several planes – race, class, gender, etc.).

Categorizing Identity

In utilizing the Identity Wheel activity, Sarah hoped to encourage both students' reflection on their own experiences, and the development of students' understanding of structural relations of power. However, in the facilitation of this exercise, *identity* was not understood as the product of one's own interpretation – rather, there were unspoken, but clear, expectations around how students “should” identify, particularly if they were perceived as a member of a “dominant” category. Sarah modeled such a practice of “confessing” ones' privileges and identities, in the interest of discouraging colorblind racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2003). For example, in introducing the Identity Wheel, Sarah was intentional in announcing, “I'm White...and that doesn't explain everything... I'm also an immigrant. But it's still important to acknowledge that I'm White.” This practice created a conundrum for students who did not “fit” well into the prescribed categories constructed by the Identity Wheel. For example, in describing Rachel, a mixed-race student, Pablo said, “I believe they were mixed...but from the outside, you would pretty much think that they were White.” Because the class constructed a practice around “confessing” ones' “dominant” identities, Rachel did indeed identify as White, saying, “I am White and not offended by discussions of Whiteness as I know more about it than some others and realize it is part of a system and I do what I can to acknowledge it and transform it.” As a result, however, the Identity Wheel prevented Rachel from being able to identify with or explore other parts of her identity as a mixed-race person. Moreover, in solidifying the notion that students perceived as “White” should primarily understand themselves as White and acknowledge their Whiteness, the Identity Wheel also served to homogenize other groups, as (visibly) Black, Latinx, Native, and Asian students were all encouraged to identify as “non-White” or “non-dominant.” This ultimately served to obscure differences both within and between groups and the varying positionalities that students held as a result of their specific experiences of oppression or lack thereof.

The Oppressed/Oppressor Binary

In addition to making clear how students were expected to identify, the Identity Wheel also asked students to map their identities on to Freire's theory of oppression as understood through the oppressed/oppressor binary. This was designed to help students recognize the power and privilege associated with their membership in each identity category, and was made most explicit through the task of labeling each identity as “dominant” or “non-dominant.” Indeed, through the activity, students realized that “everyone comes from different levels of ‘privileged-ness’ and it's not necessarily their fault” and that “it is okay to acknowledge your place of privilege in coming into any dialogue...That is how we can learn and improve.”

However, in equating their social positions with their identities, and then equating these identities with being either an “Oppressed” or “Oppressor,” students also came to understand oppression as an identity, rather than a process of domination. As Jessica put it:

[In the class], I was very much aware all the time that I'm White. It's kind of hard

to be in a class where you are being constantly reminded of the fact that you are the oppressor and literally I would feel so horrible...A lot of times I felt very much like I identified with that oppressor group.

Though Jessica's reaction was likely paired with her own racial biases (Bonilla-Silva, 2003; Cabrera, 2014), White fragility (DiAngelo, 2011), and the difficulties involved in confronting one's privileges (Leonardo, 2004), her comment was also a reaction to the conflation of *identity* and *positionality*. As she elaborated, "there are people who don't self-identify as oppressors but are told they are and will probably not have as much of a stake in the issue, because people are just calling them Oppressors and they don't understand why." In being labeled an "Oppressor," Jessica lamented her perceived inability to be or do anything different than what one would expect of an "Oppressor."

Students who were identified as Oppressors thus concluded that they had no role to play in making social change. According to Daniel, a white student, "the biggest thing I learned was how little I mattered. This helped me dismantle my understanding about being an Oppressor. Like you don't need my help, you have all the tools you need, 'just stop dehumanizing me.'" As Taylor, another white student, put it, the course made her "question what it looks like for me, positioned by Freire as the 'Oppressor,' to act in solidarity with the Oppressed." Even students of color drew similar conclusions. In reflecting on her Community Cooperative Project, Cristina, an undocumented Latinx student, realized that "even though I am undocumented, I am still coming from a privileged position and making assumptions for a community that even though I claim as my own, I am not in it." As a result of these reflections, students concluded that it would be best to just "don't do anything" since "change needs to come from the Oppressed and not the Oppressor."

These students took to heart Freire's claim that "the oppressors, who oppress, exploit, and rape *by virtue of their power*, cannot find in this power the strength to liberate either the oppressed or themselves" (Freire, 1970, p. 44). At the same time, they neglected Freire's argument that it is indeed possible for oppressors to act in solidarity with the oppressed if they "enter into the situation of those with whom [they are] solidary" (Freire, 1970, p.49). Here, Freire makes the claim that oppressors (for him, the bourgeoisie) can change their social position by entering into the social, economic, and political situation of the oppressed. However, Freire's class-centric analysis obscured the key to his argument, which is that to act in solidarity, oppressors must forgo their positions of power, and that oppression itself is a power relationship. Because the Identity Wheel encouraged students to understand race as fixed and unchangeable,⁹ they also came to understand "Oppressor" as a permanent identity or personal characteristic, rather than a social position or power relationship. Because students saw no way to change their identities as "Oppressors," they felt discouraged from participating in movements for social change.

The Identity Wheel activity demonstrates the challenges social justice educators face in teaching students to reflect on their positionalities while invoking a Freirean framework. In combining feminists' concern with positionality with Freire's emphasis on structural relations of

⁹ While scholars have long argued that race is socially constructed and thus malleable (Omi & Winant, 2014), the famous case of Rachel Dolezal, a white woman who sought to pass as Black, has demonstrated the tensions and contradictions involved in seeking to "change" one's race (Oluo, 2017; Reed, 2015). Thus, my argument here is not that students should have sought to change their positionalities by "changing" their race, but that the Identity Wheel exercise obscured students' understanding of oppression, turning it from a power relationship (in which they are empowered to take action in solidarity), to a fixed identity.

oppression and the social binaries within them, students came to understand their positionalities as identities, and to identify with the binary framework of the “Oppressed/Oppressor.” This negatively impacted students’ sense of agency to participate in social action, as they saw no role for “Oppressors” to play in the struggle for social change.

Conclusion

Critical and feminist pedagogies both draw on constructivist practices that center experience in knowledge construction, as well as the agency of the learner. Because of these similarities, it becomes easy to conflate critical and feminist pedagogical frameworks. While both critical and feminist pedagogies are concerned with the social position of the Subject in knowledge construction, poststructuralist feminists have theorized *positionality* as a fluid and malleable power relationship. In contrast, critical pedagogues have done less to theorize *positionality*. However, as scholars have argued, identity politics align well with a Marxist analysis (Alcoff, 2006), and even feminist standpoint theorists, who are of the Marxist tradition, have tended to support identity politics (Crenshaw, 1993; Hill Collins, 2000).

Thus, there are contradictions that arise in the use of Freirean frameworks to teach *positionality*. Freirean pedagogues aim to teach students about their *positionalities* in order to support students in understanding both their ability to enact social change, and the ways by which their social positions impact their construction of knowledge in relationship to the social world (Breunig, 2005; McLaren, 1991). However, in using critical pedagogy to do so, it becomes easy to conflate *identity* and *positionality*, which has consequences for student learning.

This chapter demonstrates how Sarah’s pedagogical practices resulted in this conflation. In seeking to illuminate students’ positionalities through the Privilege Walk and Identity Wheel exercises, Sarah led students to understand themselves as, and identify with, being an “Oppressed” or “Oppressor.” While this helped students understand the power and privilege (or lack thereof) associated with their membership in certain identity categories, it also led students to equate *positionality* with *identity*, understanding it as singular and static, rather than socially constructed and multiple. More importantly, in understanding oppression as an identity (Oppressed/Oppressor), rather than a social process or power relationship that can be altered through social action, students who saw themselves as “Oppressors” felt discouraged from participating in social action.

These results have significant implications. Social justice educators have long struggled to navigate the tension between *highlighting* and *deconstructing* oppressive social constructs (Butler & Weed, 2011). The need to call attention to these constructs feels particularly salient given widespread claims that we live in a “post-racial” society (Bonilla-Silva, 2003). However, in highlighting oppressive constructs and students’ relationship to them, “teachers continue to operate on deterministic assumptions about identity and its relation to knowledge production...[even as] we reject essentialist identity theories” (Sánchez-Casal & Macdonald, 2002). This study builds on this observation to demonstrate *how* teachers’ pedagogical practices *lead* students to conflate identity and positionality, thus reifying beliefs in the permanent and unitary character of identity categories. This study points to the need for critical and feminist educators to place greater emphasis on *deconstructing* the social constructs they also aim to illuminate. As this study illustrates, it is easier to *highlight* social oppressions than to deconstruct them, for as Spivak (as cited in Lee, 2011) argues, the very structure of language prohibits anti-

essentialist ideas from existing outside of a dichotomous relationship to essentialist ideas. Thus, anti-essentialist critique must always involve engaging and deconstructing essentialist concepts.

While both highlighting and deconstructing oppressive social constructs is important, critical and poststructuralist feminist educators have thus far been far more successful in doing the former. To *deconstruct* would involve a historicized understanding of positionality. As Popkewitz (1998) has argued, however, constructivist pedagogical approaches, including both critical and poststructuralist feminist pedagogies, tend not to historicize knowledge as they focus on constructing knowledge from students' individual experiences. Thus, constructivist educators fail to recognize that students "participat[e] in historically derived systems of reasoning that are themselves the unacknowledged effects of power" (Popkewitz, 1998, p. 552). As a result, constructivist pedagogical approaches encourage an individualized – and often essentialized – understanding of positionality, rather than one that is grounded in a historical and collective understanding of how particular social locations have come into being. Such a historicized understanding of positionality is also different from claiming group experience as individual experience. As noted in Chapter 6, there are also challenges involved in students understanding collective experience as personal experience; these claims tend to be identitarian. Rather, a historicized understanding of positionality would encourage students to examine the historical and social contexts through which social positions are produced, thus enabling students to both recognize and deconstruct oppressive social constructs. Such an approach might also help build ties of solidarity that move students towards social action. In writing about women's studies classrooms, Mohanty (2016) has argued that recognition of "the historical and experiential specificities and differences of women's lives" (p.42-43) can help students understand their "common differences" (p.44). This can in turn serve as the basis for feminist solidarity.

Thus, this chapter demonstrates how various constructivist pedagogical frameworks – in particular, critical and feminist pedagogies – can be conflated in practice, and the impact this conflation has on student learning. Furthermore, this chapter illustrates how the use of critical pedagogy to teach positionality – with students of various positionalities – can result in the conflation of *identity* and *positionality*. This results in essentialized notions of identity that discourage students, particularly students from positionalities of relative privilege, from participating in social action. Finally, this chapter argues that social justice educators must place greater emphasis on deconstructing the oppressive social constructs that they make visible. They can do so by centering the multiple, shifting, and contradictory nature of positionality *and* grounding the construction of these positions in a historical analysis. In so doing, students may better recognize the mutable nature of oppression, and thus see themselves as agents of social change.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

Educators, scholars, and activists have long debated the meaning of a “liberatory” education. While an abundance of literature in educational scholarship has documented the ways by which educational institutions (schools) serve to maintain and reproduce existing inequalities (Bowles & Gintis, 1977; Ferguson, 2000; Labaree, 2010; Oakes, 1985; Rios, 2006), the means by which education can disrupt, alter, or challenge larger systems of power is less clear. In particular, educators and scholars have long debated the relationship between *pedagogical practice* and anti-oppressive systemic change. While some theorists, like George Counts (1932) have advocated explicit instruction as a necessary means for addressing the hegemony of dominant ideologies, these thinkers have remained in the minority in educational scholarship. In contrast, progressive and constructivist pedagogical approaches have become dominant within the field (Phillips, 1995) as a means for addressing any number of social, educational, and even economic problems (Bowles & Gintis, 1977; Bridges, 2008; Kantor & Lowe, 1995; Labaree, 2008; Popkewitz, 1988). Reformists (Henson, 2015; Lunenburg, 2013) and radicals (Freire, 1970; hooks, 1994; Tuck, 2009) alike have advanced constructivist pedagogy as a means for approaching their respective goals. Progressive and constructivist education – with its values around democratic practice, inclusion, anti-hierarchy, informal learning, and experience and experimentation – seem to lend well to advancing the social justice ideals that scholars have argued are critical for education, and particularly, teacher education, today (Cochran-Smith, 2010; Nieto, 2000).

At the same time, scholars have also documented the limits of progressive education. Progressive education has long been critiqued for fostering anti-intellectualism (Angus & Mirel, 1999), maintaining racial inequalities (Delpit, 1988; Fallace, 2011; Margonis, 2009), articulating new forms of discipline (Popkewitz, 1998), and discouraging critical thinking about class relations (Perlstein, 2015). Despite these critiques, progressive and constructivist education remain gospel within educational scholarship at large, and within social justice education in particular. Moreover, most of these critiques have examined progressive education’s impact historically, and have tended not to focus on classroom practice itself. This dissertation addresses these gaps by examining the affordances and limitations of using progressive and constructivist pedagogical approaches to teach social justice in a present-day undergraduate teacher education classroom.

The findings from this study demonstrate how progressive pedagogical approaches can and often do advance teachers’ curricular goals around social justice. At the same, however, findings also illustrate many of the contradictions that arise in using progressive and constructivist approaches to teach social justice, particularly within a formal educational institution. In using progressive pedagogies, social justice educators aim to create alternatives to the hierarchies that typically define teacher-student relationships. At the same time, they remain positioned as agents of the State and the institutions in which they work. In examining this tension, this study finds that a social justice teacher’s efforts to create a “democratic” classroom led her to send mixed messages to her students. At times, Sarah leveraged her authority to advance social justice ideals, at the expense of creating a more “democratic” classroom space. At other times, she undermined her own authority in order to prioritize students’ agency, but at the expense of her social justice objectives. As a result, students received mixed messages regarding

both the nature of her authority and the seriousness of the social justice objectives of the course. In contrast, in prioritizing the development of students' social justice critique over the creation of a "democratic" classroom space, Tiana was still able to use constructivist pedagogical practices and create a largely democratic classroom. These findings illustrate the importance of grounding progressive and constructivist pedagogical practices in an explicit critique of oppression, particularly in formal educational institutions, where hierarchical relationships of power and authority are inherent to, and inseparable from, the educational space.

This study also examines the tensions involved in using a constructivist pedagogical approach to teach social justice when students construct knowledge from an environment and consciousness already imbued with oppression. While a constructivist pedagogical approach supported some students in making sense of their own experiences of oppression, as well as those of their peers, at times, it also served to justify students' pre-existing ideologies, rather than to support them in constructing new knowledges. In particular, the course's constructivist pedagogical approach enabled students to leverage experience as a means to minimize or reinscribe Whiteness and distance themselves from responsibility to social justice. This occurred in part because students at Stanley University occupied multiple, contradicting positionalities; thus, their experiences at times reflected the critique of oppression that ED280 aimed to cultivate, and at other times, contradicted it.

Though students held multiple social positions, they also shared a similar social location as Stanley University students. Reflecting the ideological function of schooling, students' experiences at Stanley reinscribed dominant relations of power, in contradiction to the social justice goals of the course. The course's constructivist pedagogical practice supported this process of reinscription. While students expressed a critique of dominant capitalist ideologies through reading and analysis of course material, in reflecting on their own life experiences, students concluded that challenging such ideologies was not possible or desirable. It was in constructing knowledge from Stanley's environment – which as an elite public institution, was uniquely invested in meritocratic claims – that students developed these conclusions.

Finally, this study also examines how analytically distinct concepts – such as those found within critical and feminist pedagogies – can become conflated because they draw on similar constructivist roots. In particular, I examine the tensions involved in using a Freirean pedagogical framework to teach students about their positionalities. In analyzing two pedagogical events that aimed to teach students about their positionalities – the Privilege Walk and the Identity Wheel – I find that students developed essentialized notions of identity within an "oppressed/oppressor" framework, even when their own experiences contradicted such binary understandings of experience. As a result, students came to conflate positionality with identity, understanding it as static and fixed, rather than socially constructed and malleable. Ironically, this led students, particularly students from positionalities of relative privilege, to reject the instructor's call for students to participate in social action, as they understood themselves to be defined by their identities, rather than by their actions. This occurred in part because constructivist pedagogical approaches tend not to historicize the environments from which students construct knowledge – environments that are also imbued with power and constructed through dominant power relations. Thus, I argue that social justice educators must promote a more historicized understanding of positionality that supports students in understanding the socially constructed – and thus mutable – nature of oppression.

These findings demonstrate the contradictions involved in using constructivist pedagogical approaches to teach social justice, the strategies teachers have used to navigate these

contradictions, and the impact on student learning. In advocating constructivist pedagogical approaches, scholars often assume that students construct knowledge from a power-neutral environment. In centering the power relationships embedded within the social environments from which students construct knowledge, these findings demonstrate how ideology mediates knowledge construction in complex and contradictory ways that can contradict teachers' social justice goals. On the one hand, students' personal experiences may not serve to illuminate oppression, and may even contradict the content of a social justice curriculum. On the other hand, a constructivist pedagogical approach can also encourage students to leverage experience as a means for justifying pre-existing ideologies. In these cases, personal experience becomes conflated with group experience (identity) such that identity is claimed to be a source of knowledge. These knowledge claims can be leveraged to support the dominant social order. At the same time, the conflation of experience, positionality, and identity can also impact students' sense of agency even when students hold social justice commitments. In conflating identity and positionality, students from positionalities of relative privilege felt disempowered from taking social action, as they saw themselves defined by identities that they saw as contradictory to social justice action. In illustrating the many contradictions involved in using constructivist pedagogical practices to teach social justice, this study demonstrates the importance of foregrounding political analysis over pedagogical method within social justice education, as a variety of methods may achieve teachers' social justice goals. In fact, this study demonstrates how a more explicit critique of oppression better supported students in developing a social justice analysis, while still allowing for the integration of progressive and democratic practices within the classroom space.

In so doing, this study contributes to scholarship in social justice education, teacher education, and curriculum theory. By demonstrating some of the limitations of progressive pedagogies for teaching social justice, this research challenges widely held assumptions that progressive pedagogies can remedy an array of social and educational issues, or that constructivist pedagogies are inherently equity- or justice- oriented. This is important given the widespread use of constructivist pedagogies for teaching social justice today. In highlighting some of the limitations of constructivist pedagogies, this research aims to push scholars, educators, and activists to consider social and economic (rather than pedagogical) solutions to problems that are fundamentally social and economic. At the same time, this research also demonstrates how an explicit critique of oppression can better promote students' commitment to social justice ideals than progressive pedagogies. In illustrating the importance of grounding progressive pedagogical practices in an explicit critique of oppression, this work provides guidance for teachers invested in these ideals.

At the same time, there remain several limitations to the study. Because the study was conducted at an elite university, the majority of students interviewed were White, Asian, or Latinx, and all held positions of relative privilege by virtue of their affiliation with Stanley University. Thus, the impact of constructivist pedagogical practices on the learning of students from positionalities that Fanon has described as "the wretched of the earth" (Fanon, 1963) was not examined in this study. This is important as it limited the degree to which this study was able to examine the impact of constructivism on the development of students' social justice values when students have internalized their own oppression. Instead, this study focused on the impact of constructivist pedagogies on students' critique of oppression given that students construct knowledge from an environment and consciousness imbued with oppression. Furthermore, this study focused on an undergraduate teacher education classroom given the key role that teacher

educators play in cultivating the social justice critique of future teachers and thus their students. It would be useful for future studies to examine other settings, such as those in K-12 schools, to understand the range of ways that teachers and students navigate the tension between the development of students' self-directed thinking and their critique of oppression. This would enable researchers to understand both the affordances and limitations of the range of ways teachers and students navigate this paradox, as well as the impact of different environments on this dilemma.

The tension between cultivating students' self-directed thinking and their understanding of and commitment to social justice values remains an enduring dilemma that reflects the same tension between individual freedom and equality at the heart of American democracy. While this tension may not be resolvable, scholars, educators, and activists have long dreamed of and worked toward a more liberatory educational system and society that reflects the best parts of both ideals. The path to such a prefigurative politic has long been filled with contradictions. While this dissertation does not resolve this dilemma, it does illuminate how teachers and students have sought to navigate this paradox and actualize these ideals in practice. In so doing, this study contributes to the long history of experimental educational projects that have sought to actualize education as the practice of freedom (Freire, 1976), and provide future educators with additional tools, strategies, and critiques for manifesting this vision.

Bibliography

- Adams, M., Bell, L.A., Goodman, D. & Joshi, K. (2016). *Teaching for diversity and social justice*. New York: Routledge.
- Alcoff, L. (1988). Cultural feminism versus post-structuralism: The identity crisis in feminist theory. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 13 (3), 405-436.
- Alcoff, L. (2006). *Visible identities: Race, gender, and the self*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Alcoff, L., Hames-García, M., Mohanty, S., & Moya, P. (2006). *Identity politics reconsidered*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Alcoff, L. & Mohanty, S. (2006). Reconsidering identity politics: An introduction. In L. Alcoff, M. Hames-García, S. Mohanty, & P. Moya (Eds.). *Identity politics reconsidered* (pp. 1-9). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Althusser, L. (1971). *Lenin and philosophy and other essays* (B. Brewster, Trans.). New York: Monthly Review.
- Anderson, J. (1988). *The education of Blacks in the South 1860-1935*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Angus, D. L., & Mirel, J. (1999). *The failed promise of the American high school, 1890-1995*. NY: Teachers College Press.
- Apple, M. (1971). The hidden curriculum and the nature of conflict. *Interchange*, 2(4), 27-40.
- Apple, M. & Beane, J. (2007). *Democratic schools: Lessons in powerful education*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Applebaum, B. (2009). Is teaching for social justice a “liberal bias”? *Teachers College Record*, 111(2), 376–408.
- Au, W. (2016). Meritocracy 2.0: High-stakes, standardized testing as a racial project of neoliberal multiculturalism. *Educational Policy*, 30(1), 39-62.
- Avrich, P. (1980). *The Modern School Movement: Anarchism and education in the United States*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Ayers, W., Kumashiro, K., Meiners, E., Quinn, T., Stovall, D. (2016). *Teaching toward democracy: Educators as agents of change*. New York: Routledge.
- Bada & Olusegun, S. (2015). Constructivism learning theory: A paradigm for teaching and learning. *Journal of Research & Method in Education*, 5(6), 66-70.
- Bereiter, C. (1994). Constructivism, socioculturalism, and Popper’s world 3. *Educational Researcher*, 23(7), 21-23.
- Bizzell, P. (1991). Power, authority, and critical pedagogy. *Journal of Basic Writing*, 10(2) 54-70.
- Bode, B. (1938). *Progressive Education at the Crossroads*. New York: Newson & Company.
- Bogdan, R.C., & Biklen, S.K. (2007). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theories and methods (5th ed.)*. Boston: Pearson Education.
- Bohm, D. (1996). *On dialogue*. New York: Routledge.
- Bonilla-Silva, E. (2003). *Racism without racists: Color-blind racism and the persistence of racial inequality in America*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Bourdieu, P., Wacquant, L., & Farage, S. (1994). Rethinking the State: Genesis and structure of the bureaucratic field. *Sociological Theory*, 12(1), 1-18.
- Bowles, S. & Gintis, H. (1977). *Schooling in capitalist America: Educational reform and the contradictions of economic life*. New York: Basic Books.

- Bredo, E. (2000). Reconsidering social constructivism: The relevance of George Herbert Mead's interactionism. In D. C. Phillips (Ed.), *Constructivism in education: Opinions and second opinions on controversial issues* (pp. 127-157). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Breunig, M. (2005). Turning experiential education and critical pedagogy theory into praxis. *Journal of Experiential Education*, 28(2), 106-122.
- Bridges, D. (2008). Educationalization: On the appropriateness of asking educational institutions to solve social and economic problems. *Educational Theory*, 58(4), 461-474.
- Brodkin, K. (1998). *How Jews became White folks and what that says about race in America*. New Jersey: Rutgers University Press.
- Burbules, N. (2000). The limits of dialogue as a critical pedagogy. In P. Trifonas (Ed.), *Revolutionary pedagogies*. New York: Routledge.
- Butler, J. (1991). Imitation and gender insubordination. In D. Fuss (Ed.), *Inside/out: Lesbian theories, gay theories* (pp. 637-647). New York: Routledge.
- Butler, J. & Weed, E. (2011). *The question of gender: Joan W. Scott's critical feminism*. Indiana: Indiana University Press.
- Cabrera, N. (2014). Exposing whiteness in higher education: white male college students minimizing racism, claiming victimization, and recreating white supremacy. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 17 (1), 30-55.
- Carlson, D. (1987). Teachers as political actors: From reproductive theory to the crisis of schooling. *Harvard Educational Review*, 57(3), 283-308.
- Chennault, R. (2013). Pragmatism and progressivism in the educational thought and practices of Booker T. Washington. *Philosophical Studies in Education*, 44, 121-131.
- Cho, S. (2012). *Critical pedagogy and social change*. New York: Routledge.
- Cobb, P. (1994). Where is the mind? Constructivist and sociocultural perspectives on mathematical development. *Educational Researcher*, 23(7), 13-20.
- Cochran-Smith, M. (2010). Defining the outcomes of teacher education: What's social justice got to do with it? *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education* 32(3), 193-212.
- Cole, M. (2005). Transmodernism, Marxism, and social change: some implications for teacher education. *Policy Futures in Education*, 3(1), 90-105.
- Collin, R. & Apple, M.W. (2015). Can neo-Marxian and poststructural theories in education inform each other? Using genre approaches to bridge the gap. In N. Markee (Ed.), *The handbook of classroom discourse and interaction* (pp. 115-127). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.
- Counts, G. (1932). *Dare the school build a new social order?* Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Cremin, L. A. (1964). *The transformation of the school: Progressivism in American education, 1876-1957*. New York: Knopf.
- Crenshaw, K. (1993). Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color. *Stanford Law Review*, 43(6), 1241-1299.
- Cuban, L. (1993). *How teachers taught: Constancy and change in American classrooms, 1890-1990*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Darder, A., Baltodano, M., & Torres, R.D. (2003). Critical Pedagogy: An Introduction. In A. Darder, M. Baltodano, & R.D. Torres (Eds.), *The Critical Pedagogy Reader* (pp. 1-24). New York: RoutledgeFalmer.
- Darder, A., Mayo, P., & Paraskeva, J. (2016). *International critical pedagogy reader*. New York: Routledge.

- Deal, T. & Nolan, R. (1978). *Alternative schools: Ideologies, realities, guidelines*. Chicago: Nelson-Hall.
- Delpit, L. (1988). The silenced dialogue: Power and pedagogy in educating other people's children. *Harvard Educational Review*, 58(3), 280-299.
- Delpit, L. (1995). *Other people's children: Cultural conflict in the classroom*. New York: The New Press.
- Dennis, M. (1998). Schooling along the color line: Progressives and the education of Blacks in the New South. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 67(2), 142-156.
- Dennis, M. (2001). *Lessons in progress: State universities and Progressivism in the New South, 1880-1920*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
- DeVito, D., Shamber, M., Sher, S., LaGravenese, R., Isham, M., RZA (Rapper), Swank, H., Dempsey, P., Glenn, S., Staunton, I., Hernandez, A. L., Mario., Herrera, K., Ngan, J., Montalvo, S., Wyatt, D., Smith, V., Chavarria, G., Parrish, H., & Gruwell, E. (2007). *Freedom writers*. Hollywood, CA: Paramount Home Entertainment.
- Dewey, J. (1897). My pedagogic creed. *School Journal* 54, 77-80.
- Dewey, J. (1899). *The school and society: Being three lectures*. New York: McClure, Phillips & Company.
- Dewey, J. (1938). *Experience and education*. New York: Macmillan.
- Dewey, J. (1944). *Democracy and education*. New York: Free Press.
- DiAngelo, R. (2011). White fragility. *International Journal of Critical Pedagogy*, 3(3), 54-70.
- Du Bois, W.E.B. (1903). *The souls of black folk*. Chicago: A.C. McClurg & Co.
- Dumas, M. (2016). Against the dark: Antiblackness in education policy and discourse. *Theory into Practice*, 55(1), 11-19.
- Duncan-Andrade, J.M.R. & Morrell, E. (2008). *The art of critical pedagogy: Possibilities for moving from theory to practice in urban schools*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc.
- Eagly, A. & Carli, L. (2018). Women and the labyrinth of leadership. In W. Rosenbach, R. Taylor, & M. Youndt (Eds.), *Contemporary issues in leadership* (pp. 147-162). New York: Routledge.
- Edwards, D.B. (2010). Critical pedagogy and democratic education: Possibilities for cross-pollination. *Urban Review: Issues and Ideas in Public Education*, 42(3), 221-242.
- Eldridge, M. (2004). Dewey on race and social change. In B. Lawson & D. Koch (Eds.), *Pragmatism and the problem of race* (pp. 11-21). Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
- Ellerton, N. & Clements, M.A. (1992). Some pluses and minuses of radical constructivism in mathematics education. In B. Southwell, B. Perry, & K. Owens (Eds.), *Space - The first and final frontier* (pp. 261-275). Sidney: Mathematics Education Research Group of Australasia.
- Ellis, C., Adams, T.E., & Bochner, A.P. (2011). Autoethnography: an overview. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 12(1), Art. 10.
- Ellsworth, E. (1989). Why doesn't this feel empowering? Working through the repressive myths of critical pedagogy. *Harvard Educational Review*, 59(3), 297-324.
- Emerson, R., Fretz, R., & Shaw, L. (1995). *Writing ethnographic fieldnotes*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Fallace, T. (2011). *Dewey and the dilemma of race: An intellectual history, 1895-1922*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Fanon, F. (1952). *Black skin, white masks*. New York: Grove Press.
- Fanon, F. (1963). *Wretched of the earth*. New York: Grove Press.

- Farhi, P. (2019, July 2). Breitbart, the once-insurgent far-right site, has slowly faded. *SFGate*. Retrieved from <https://www.sfgate.com/entertainment/article/Breitbart-the-once-insurgent-far-right-site-has-14067773.php>
- Feagin, J., Vera, H., & Batur, P. (2001). *White racism: The basics*. New York: Routledge.
- Ferguson, A. (2000). *Bad Boys*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Ferrer, F. (1913). *The origin and ideals of the modern school*. (J. McCabe, Trans.). New York: The Knickerbocker Press.
- Foucault, M. (1979). *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, Inc.
- Freire, P. (1973). *Education for critical consciousness*. New York: Continuum Impacts.
- Freire, P. (1976). *Education, the practice of freedom*. London: Writers and Readers Publishing Cooperative.
- Freire, P. (1998). *Pedagogy of freedom: Ethics, democracy, and civic courage*. Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
- Freire, P. & Macedo, D. (1995). A dialogue: Culture, language, and race. *Harvard Educational Review*, 65(3) 377-403.
- Garrison, J. (1997). An alternative to Von Glasersfeld's subjectivism in science education: Deweyan social constructivism. *Science and Education*, 6, 543-554.
- Generals, D. (2000). Booker T. Washington and progressive education: An experimentalist approach to curriculum development and reform. *Journal of Negro Education*, 69(3), 215-234.
- Gergen, K. (1994). *Realities and relations: Soundings in social construction*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University.
- Giroux, H.A. (1988). Literacy and the pedagogy of voice and political empowerment. *Educational Theory*, 38(1), 61-75.
- Giroux, H.A. & McLaren, P. (1986). Teacher education and the politics of engagement: The case for democratic schooling. *Harvard Educational Review*, 56(3), 213-238.
- Glasersfeld, E. (1993). Questions and answers about radical constructivism. In K. Tobin (Ed.), *The practice of constructivism in science education* (pp. 17-29). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Glasersfeld, E. (1995). *Radical constructivism: A way of knowing and learning*. Washington, DC: Falmer.
- Goodenow, R. (1975). The progressive educator, race and ethnicity in the Depression years: An overview. *History of Education Quarterly*, 15(4), 365-394.
- Goodenow, R. (1977). Racial and ethnic tolerance in John Dewey's educational and social thought: The Depression years. *Educational Theory*, 27(1), 48-64.
- Goodenow, R. (1978). Paradox in progressive educational reform: The South and the education of Blacks in the Depression years. *Phylon*, 39(1), 49-65.
- Gore, J. (1995). On the continuity of power relations in pedagogy. *International Studies in Sociology of Education* 5(2), 165-188.
- Gramsci, A. (1971). *Selections from the prison notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*. (Q. Hoare & G. Nowell-Smith, Trans.). New York: International Publishers.
- Grant, J. (1987). I feel therefore I am: A critique of experience as a basis for feminist epistemology. In M. Falco (Ed.), *Feminism and epistemology: Approaches to research in women and politics*. New York: Haworth.

- Graubard, A. (1972). *Free the children: Radical reform and the Free School Movement*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Gutiérrez, K.D. (2011). Developing a sociocritical literacy in the third space. *Reading Research Quarterly* 43(2), 148-164.
- Gutiérrez, K.D. (2016). 2011 AERA Presidential Address: Designing resilient ecologies: Social design experiments and a new social imagination. *Educational Researcher*, 45(3), 187-196.
- Gutiérrez, K.D. & Jurow, A.S. (2016). Social design experiments: Toward equity by design. *Journal of the Learning Sciences*, 25(4), 565-598.
- Gutiérrez, K. & Vossoughi, S. (2010). Lifting off the ground to return anew: Mediated praxis, transformative learning, and social design experiments. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 61(1-2), 100-117.
- Hackman, H. (2005). Five essential components for social justice education. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 38(2), 103-109.
- Hall, S. (1990). Cultural identity and diaspora. In J. Rutherford (Ed.), *Identity: community, culture, difference* (pp. 222-237). London: Lawrence & Wishart.
- Hanley, M.S. (2011). You better recognize!: The arts as social justice for African American students. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 44(3), 420-444.
- Haraway, D. (2016). Situated knowledges: The science question in feminism and the privilege of partial perspective. In A. Jaggar (Ed.), *Just methods: An interdisciplinary feminist reader* (pp. 346-352). New York: Routledge.
- Harding, S. (1991). *Whose science? Whose knowledge?: Thinking from women's lives*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Harding, S. (2004). A socially relevant philosophy of science? Resources from standpoint theory's controversiality. *Hypatia* 19(1), 25-47.
- Harding, S., & Norberg, K. (2005). New feminist approaches to social science methodologies: An introduction. *Signs*, 30, 2009-2015.
- Harlan, L. (1966). Booker T. Washington and the White Man's Burden. *The American Historical Review*, 71(2), 441-467.
- Harrell-Levy, M.L., Kerpelman, J.L. & Henry, D. (2016). 'Minds were forced wide open': Black adolescents' identity exploration in a transformative social justice class. *Education, Citizenship, and Social Justice*, 11(2), 99-113.
- Hartsock, N. (2004). Comment on Hekman's "Truth and method: Feminist standpoint theory revisited": Truth or justice?. In S. Harding (Ed.), *The feminist standpoint theory reader: Intellectual and political controversies* (pp. 225-242). New York: Routledge.
- Hekman, S. (2013). *Feminism, identity, and difference*. New York: Routledge.
- Hennessy, R. (1993). Women's lives/feminist knowledge: Feminist standpoint as ideology critique. *Hypatia*, 8(1) 14-34.
- Henson, K. (2015). *Curriculum planning: Integrating multiculturalism, constructivism, and education reform*. Illinois: Waveland Press, Inc.
- Herr, K. & Anderson, G. (2005). *The action research dissertation: A guide for students and faculty*. California: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Hill Collins, P. (2000). *Black feminist thought: Knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment*. New York: Routledge.
- Hodson, D. & Hodson, J. (1998). From constructivism to social constructivism: A Vygotskian perspective on teaching and learning science. *School Science Review*, 79 (289), 33-41.

- hooks, b. (1990). *Yearning: Race, gender, and cultural politics*. Boston: South End Press.
- hooks, b. (1994). *Teaching to transgress: Education as the practice of freedom*. New York: Routledge.
- hooks, b. & Hall, S. (2018). *Uncut funk: A contemplative dialogue*. New York: Routledge.
- Hyslop-Margison, E. J. & Strobel, J. (2007). Constructivism and education: Misunderstandings and pedagogical implications. *The Teacher Educator*, 43(1), 72-8.
- Illich, I. (1971). *Deschooling society*. New York: Harper & Row Publishers.
- James, M. (1995). Southern progressivism during the Great Depression: Virginia and African-American social reconstruction. In M. James (Ed.), *Social reconstruction through education: The philosophy, history, & curricula of a radical ideal* (109-138). New Jersey: Ablex Publishing Corporation.
- Jamieson, K. (1995). *Beyond the double bind: Women and leadership*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Kantor, H. & Lowe, R. (1995). Class, race, and the emergence of federal education policy: From the New Deal to the Great Society. *Educational Researcher* 24(3), 4-11, 21.
- Kaplan, C. & Grewal, I. (1999). Transnational feminist cultural studies: Beyond the Marxism/Poststructuralism/Feminism divides. In C. Kaplan, N. Alarcón, & M. Moallem (Eds.), *Between woman and nation: Nationalisms, transnational feminisms, and the State* (pp. 349-364). Durham: Duke University Press.
- Karabel, J. (1972). Open admissions: Toward meritocracy or democracy? *Change* 4(4), 38-43.
- Kliebard, H. M. (2004). *The struggle for the American curriculum, 1893-1958* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: RoutledgeFalmer.
- Knowles, E., Lowery, B., Chow, R., & Unzueta, M. (2014). Deny, distance, or dismantle? How white Americans manage a privileged identity. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 9(6), 594-609.
- Kuhn, T.S. (1970). *The structure of scientific revolutions* (2nd ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Labaree, D. F. (1997). Public goods, private goods: The American struggle over educational goals. *American Educational Research Journal*, 34(1), 39-81.
- Labaree, D. F. (2005). Progressivism, schools, and schools of education: An American romance. *Paedagogica Historica*, 41(1-2), 275-288.
- Labaree, D. F. (2008). The winning ways of a losing strategy: Educationalizing social problems in the United States. *Educational Theory*, 58(4), 447-460.
- Labaree, D. F. (2010). *Someone has to fail: The zero-sum game of public schooling*. USA: Harvard University Press.
- Lawson, B. (2004). Booker T. Washington: A pragmatist at work. In B. Lawson & D. Koch (Eds.), *Pragmatism and the problem of race* (125-141). Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
- LeCompte, M.D. & Schensul, J.J. (2010). *Designing and conducting ethnographic research: An introduction*. Maryland: AltaMira Press.
- LeCourt, D. (2004). *Identity matters: Schooling the student body in academic discourse*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Lee, E. (2011). The epistemology of the question of authenticity, in place of strategic essentialism. *Hypatia*, 26(2), 258-279.
- Leonardo, Z. (2002). The souls of White folk: Critical pedagogy, whiteness studies, and

- globalization discourse. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 5(1) 29-50.
- Leonardo, Z. (2004). The color of supremacy: Beyond the discourse of 'white privilege.' *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 36 (2), 137-152.
- Lloyd, M. (2005). *Beyond identity politics: Feminism, power, and politics*. London: Sage Publications.
- Love, B. (2013). 'Oh, they're sending a bad message': Black males resisting & challenging Eurocentric notions of Blackness within hip hop & the mass media through critical pedagogy. *International Journal of Critical Pedagogy*, 4(3), 24-39.
- Luke, C. (1996). Feminist pedagogy theory: Reflections on power and authority. *Educational Theory*, 46(3), 283-302.
- Luke, C. & Gore J. (1992). *Feminisms and critical pedagogy*. New York: Routledge.
- Lunenburg, F. (2013). Constructivism and technology: Instructional designs for successful education reform. *Journal of Instructional Psychology*, 25(2), 75-81.
- Maher, F. (1999). Progressive education and feminist pedagogies: Issues in gender, power, and authority. *Teachers College Record*, 101(1), 35-59.
- Marable, M. (1974). Booker T. Washington and African nationalism. *Phylon*, 35(4), 398-406.
- Margonis, F. (2009). John Dewey's racialized visions of the student and classroom community. *Educational Theory*, 59(1), 17-39.
- Matthews, M. R. (1997). Introductory comments on philosophy and constructivism in science education. *Science & Education*, 6, 5-14.
- Matthews, M. R. (2000). Appraising constructivism in science and mathematics. In D. Phillips (Ed.), *Constructivism in Education* (pp. 161-192). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- McCann, H. (2016). Epistemology of the subject: Queer theory's challenge to feminist sociology. *Women's Studies Quarterly*, 44(3-4), 224-243.
- McIntyre, A. (2008). *Participatory action research*. California: Sage Publications, Inc.
- McKay, C.L. (2010). Community education and critical race praxis: The power of voice. *Educational Foundations*, 24(1-2), 25-38.
- McLaren, P. (1991). Critical pedagogy: Constructing an arch of social dreaming and a doorway to hope. *Journal of Education*, 173(1), 9-34.
- Miller, J. (1987). *Democracy is in the streets: From Port Huron to the siege of Chicago*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Mishler, P. (1999). *Raising reds: The Young Pioneers, radical summer camps, and Communist political culture in the United States*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Mohanty, C. (2016). Antiglobalization pedagogies. In T. Dickinson & R. Schaeffer. *Transformations: Feminist pathways to global change, an analytical anthology* (pp. 39-45). New York: Routledge.
- Moya, P. (2002). *Learning from experience: Minority identities, multicultural struggles*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Neubert, S. (2010). Democracy and education in the twenty-first century: Deweyan pragmatism and the question of racism. *Educational Theory*, 60(4), 487-502.
- Nieto, S. (2000). Placing equity front and center: Some thoughts on transforming teacher education for a new century. *Journal of Teacher Education* 51(3), 180-187.
- Noddings, N. (1998). *Philosophy of education*. Colorado: Westview Press.
- O'Loughlin, M. (1995). Daring the imagination: Unlocking voices of dissent and possibility in teaching. *Theory Into Practice*, 24 (2), 107-116.

- Oakes, J. (1985). *Keeping track: How schools structure inequality*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Okun, T. (2010). *The emperor has no clothes: Teaching about race and racism to people who don't want to know*. USA: Information Age Publishing, Inc.
- Oluo, I. (2017, April 19). The heart of Whiteness: Ijeoma Oluo interviews Rachel Dolezal, the White woman who identifies as Black. *The Stranger*. Retrieved from <https://www.thestranger.com/features/2017/04/19/25082450/the-heart-of-whiteness-ijeoma-oluo-interviews-rachel-dolezal-the-white-woman-who-identifies-as-black>.
- Omi, M. & Winant, H. (2014). *Racial formation in the United States, Third Edition*. New York: Routledge.
- Paringer, W.A. (1990). *John Dewey and the paradox of liberal reform*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Perlstein, D. (1996). Community and democracy in American schools: Arthurdale and the fate of progressive education. *Teachers College Record*, 97(4), 625-650.
- Perlstein, D. (2000). "There is no escape ... from the ogre of indoctrination:" George Counts and the civic dilemmas of democratic educators. In L. Cuban and D. Shipp. *Reconstructing the common good in education: Coping with intractable American dilemmas* (pp. 51-67). Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Perlstein, D. (2002). Minds stayed on freedom: Politics and pedagogy in the African-American freedom struggle. *American Educational Research Journal*, 39 (2), 249-277.
- Perlstein, D. (2015). "Starting life again": School and community at Arthurdale (US 1934–1936). In E. Rodriguez (Ed.), *Pedagogies and curriculums to (re)imagine public education* (pp. 81-95). New York: Springer.
- Perlstein, D. (2016). Class. In A. J. Angulo (Ed.), *Miseducation: A history of ignorance-making in America and abroad* (pp. 123-139). Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Philip, T., Gupta, A. Elby, A., & Turpen, C. (2017). Why ideology matters for learning: A case of ideological convergence in an engineering ethics classroom discussion on drone warfare. *Journal of the Learning Sciences*, 27(2), 183-223.
- Phillips, D. C. (1995). The good, the bad, and the ugly: The many faces of constructivism. *Educational Researcher*, 24(7), 5-12.
- Picower, B. (2012). Teacher activism: Enacting a vision for social justice. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 45(4), 561-574.
- Popkewitz, T. S. (1984). *Paradigms and ideologies in educational research*. London: Falmer.
- Popkewitz, T. S. (1988). Educational reform: Rhetoric, ritual, and social interest. *Educational Theory*, 38(1), 77-93.
- Popkewitz, T. S. (1998). Dewey, Vygotsky, and the social administration of the individual: Constructivist pedagogy as systems of ideas in historical spaces. *American Educational Research Journal*, 35(4), 535-570.
- Popkewitz, T. S. & Brennan, M. (1998). *Foucault's challenge: Discourse, knowledge, and power in education*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Rainey, J. (2012, August 1). Breitbart.com sets sights on ruling the conservative conversation. *Los Angeles Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.latimes.com/entertainment/la-xpm-2012-aug-01-la-et-breitbart-20120801-story.html>.
- Reed, A. (2015, June 15). From Jenner to Dolezal: One trans good, the other not so much. *Common Dreams*. Retrieved from

- <https://www.commondreams.org/views/2015/06/15/jenner-dolezal-one-trans-good-other-not-so-much>.
- Resnick, L. B. (1989). Introduction. In L. B. Resnick (Ed.), *Knowing, learning, and instruction: Essays in honor of Robert Glaser* (pp. 1-24). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Richardson, L. (2000). Writing: A method of inquiry. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp.923-948). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Richardson, V. (2003). Constructivist pedagogy. *Teachers College Record*, 105 (9), 1623-1640.
- Rios, V. (2006). The hyper-criminalization of Black and Latino male youth in the era of mass incarceration. *Souls*, 8(2) 40-54.
- Rodriguez, A. (1998). Strategies for counterresistance: Toward sociotransformative constructivism and learning to teach science for diversity and for understanding. *Journal of Research in Science Teaching* 35(6), 589-622.
- Rousseau, J. (1921). *Émile*. (B. Foxley, Trans.). New York: E.P. Dutton & Co. (Original work published 1762).
- Sánchez-Casal, S. & Macdonald, A. (2002). Feminist reflections on the pedagogical relevance of identity. In A. Macdonald & S. Sánchez-Casal (Eds.), *Twenty-first-century feminist classrooms: Pedagogies of identity and difference* (pp. 1-28). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Scott, J. (1991). The evidence of experience. *Critical Inquiry*, 17(4) 773-797.
- Seatter, C. S. (2003). Constructivist science teaching: intellectual and strategic teaching acts. *Interchange*, 34, 63-87.
- Seigfried, C. (2002). *Feminist interpretations of John Dewey*. University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Sharma, P., Anderson, A., Mao, J., Hsieh, P., Xie, Y. (2005). On being a radical constructivist. *Educational Technology*, 45(6), 22-30.
- Shaull, R. (1970). Foreword. In P. Freire, *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (pp. 29-34). New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, Inc.
- Shor, I. (1992). *Empowering education: Critical teaching for social change*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Shor, I. & Freire, P. (1987). *A pedagogy for liberation: Dialogues on transforming education*. Westport, Connecticut: Bergin & Garvey.
- Skinner, B. F. (1953). *Science and human behavior*. Oxford, England: Macmillan.
- Smith, L. T. (2012). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and indigenous peoples*. London: Zed Books.
- Snyder, J. (2015). Progressive education in Black and White: Rereading Carter G. Woodson's Miseducation of the Negro. *History of Education Quarterly*, 55(3), 273-293.
- Spivak, G. (2006). *In other worlds: Essays in cultural politics*. New York: Routledge.
- Stack, S. (2009). John Dewey and the question of race: The fight for Odell Waller. *Education and Culture*, 25(1), 17-35.
- Sullivan, S. (2003). (Re)construction zone: Beware of falling statues. In W. Gavin (Ed.), *In Dewey's wake: Unfinished work of pragmatic reconstruction* (pp. 109-128). New York: State University of New York Press.
- Swidler, A. (1979). *Organization without authority: Dilemmas of social control in free schools*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Takacs, D. (2003). How does your positionality bias your epistemology? *Thought and Action*, 19(1), 27-38.

- Tam, M. (2000). Constructivism, instructional design, and technology: Implications for transforming distance learning. *Educational Technology and Society*, 3(2).
- Tarlau, R. (2014). From a language to a theory of resistance: Critical pedagogy, the limits of “framing,” and social change. *Educational Theory*, 64(4), 369-392.
- Teitelbaum, K. & Reese, W. (1983). American socialist pedagogy and experimentation in the Progressive Era: The Socialist Sunday School. *History of Education Quarterly*, 23(4), 429-454.
- Themelis, S. (2008). Meritocracy through education and social mobility in post-war Britain: a critical examination. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 29(5), 427-438.
- Tien, J. (2017). “Democratic” for whom? Teaching racial justice through critical pedagogy. In B. Picower & R. Kohli (Eds.), *Confronting racism in teacher education: Counternarratives of critical practice* (pp. 103-109). New York: Routledge.
- Tobin, K. (1993). *The practice of constructivism in science education*. Washington, DC: American Association for the Advancement of Science.
- Tuck, E. (2009). Re-visioning action: Participatory action research and indigenous theories of change. *Urban Review* 41(1), 47-65.
- Vorsino, M. (2015). Re-reading Dewey through a feminist lens. *Educational Perspectives*, 47(1-2), 50-54.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Walkerline, V. (1992). Progressive pedagogy and political struggle. In C. Luke & J. Gore (Eds.), *Feminisms and critical pedagogy*. New York and London: Routledge.
- Walkerline, V. (1994). Femininity as performance. In L. Stone (Ed.), *The education feminism reader*. New York: Routledge.
- Washington, B.T. (1901). *Up from slavery: An autobiography*. New York: A.L. Burt.
- Washington, B.T. (1903). Industrial education for the Negro. *The Negro problem*. New York: James Pott and Company. Retrieved from <http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/industrial-education-for-the-negro/>
- Washington, B.T. (1974). Atlanta compromise speech. In L. Harlan (Ed.), *The Booker T. Washington papers Vol. 3* (pp. 583-587). Urbana: University of Illinois Press. (Original speech delivered 1895).
- Weiler, K. (1991). Freire and a feminist pedagogy of difference. *Harvard Educational Review*, 61(4), 449-474.
- Weiler, K. (2001). Rereading Paulo Freire. In K. Weiler (Ed.), *Feminist engagements: Reading, resisting, and re-visioning male theorists in education and cultural studies* (pp.67-88). New York: Routledge.
- Weiler, K. (2006). The historiography of gender and progressive education in the United States. *Paedagogica Historica*, 42(1-2), 161-176.
- Weir, A. (2013). *Identities and freedom: Feminist theory between power and connection*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Wekker, G. (2016). *White innocence: Paradoxes of colonialism and race*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Wertsch, J. V. (1991). *Voices of the mind: A sociocultural approach to mediated action*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- West, M.R. (2006). *The education of Booker T. Washington: American democracy and the idea of race relations*. New York: Columbia University Press.

- Westbrook, R. (1991). *John Dewey and American democracy*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Wise, J. & Bone, W. (1989, Jan. 24). Why Grades are Oppressive. *The Daily Cal*, pp. 4.
- Wolf, A. 2002. *Does education matter?* London: Penguin.
- Woodson, C. (1933). *The mis-education of the Negro*. Washington, DC: Associated Publishers.
- Zembylas, M. (2005). Three perspectives on linking the cognitive and the emotional in science learning: Conceptual change, socio-constructivism, and poststructuralism. *Studies in Science Education*, 41(1), 91-115.
- Zevenbergen, R. (1996). Constructivism as a liberal bourgeois discourse. *Educational Studies in Mathematics*, 31(1/2), 95-113.
- Zimmerman, A. (2010). *Alabama in Africa: Booker T. Washington, the German empire, and the globalization of the New South*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.