DEVELOPING AGENTS OF CHANGE: A CASE STUDY ON PRESERVICE TEACHER LEADERS’ CONCEPTUALIZATIONS OF SOCIAL JUSTICE TEACHER LEADERSHIP

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate how a set of preservice teachers who have been identified as leaders in their teacher education programs conceptualize social justice teacher leadership. A collective, qualitative case study design using five preservice teachers as individual cases was used to address this study’s purpose and a social justice teacher leadership conceptual framework was developed and used in data analysis. Two interviews were conducted with each case participant and resulting data were analyzed using the framework.

Research findings support potential theoretical expansions of critical pedagogy, transformative learning, and the nature of taking action as a social justice teacher leader. Findings further suggest scholarship and practice should consider how democratic learning environments and servant leadership are addressed in teacher and leadership education. Reflexive practice following the completion of this project encouraged the conceptualization of an Evolved Social Justice Teacher Leadership Model. This new model points to research opportunities extending from this study.

Results of this study deliver a call to action involving those who currently hold power for reform in teacher and leadership preparation and PK12 schooling contexts. School administrators must empower teachers as leaders in social justice through professional development and deliberately recruit teachers with capacities for social justice teacher leadership and from programs with such orientations. Preparation program administrators must reform their course curriculum to include the empowerment of future and inservice teacher leaders, with leadership programs holding unique responsibilities in such work. Further, future research should be longitudinal in nature, aim to develop the social justice teacher leadership framework and its new model, and investigate relationships between school administrators and social justice teacher leaders.
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

If education is to be the great equalizer it is often characterized, it must concern itself with social change (Bercaw & Stooksberry, 2004; Conklin, 2008). Freire (1970) contends while social transformation is not contingent upon education, change cannot occur without it. Giroux and McLaren (1996) posit such change begins in the public sphere (e.g., the classroom) and moves on to infiltrate students’ lives beyond school settings. Bercaw and Stooksberry (2004) agree suggesting just as institutions have power to perpetuate dominant beliefs, they also possess power to examine and reconcile unjust social norms. These scholars assert this promise is especially true for schools.

Despite the critical potential public education holds in social change, research consistently suggests educational prospects, resources, achievement, and favorable outcomes are disparate when low-income students or students of color are compared to their white, middle-class peers (Cochran-Smith, Shakman, Jon, Terrell, Barnatt, & McQuillan, 2009; Howard, 2010; North, 2006). Furthermore, as our nation’s social demography is shifting and student populations are increasingly diversifying, educational policies that seek to control students have developed (Gee, 1999; Howard, 2010; Moll & Arnot-Hopffer, 2005). Further complicating the work of schools, increasing accountability to mandated policies, to which teachers are legally responsible, leaves little room for accountability to the sociocultural reality of growing diversity in schools (Canestrari & Marlowe, 2005; Moll & Arnot-Hopffer, 2005; Webb, 2002).

Such changes in the social and political dynamics of schooling coupled with an educational system and society wrought with inequality have brought social justice to the
forefront of concerns in the American educational system (Brown, 2004; Howard, 2010; Jean-Marie, Normore, & Brooks, 2009; Furman, 2012). Yet, despite an attempt to focus on social justice, the contemporary reform agenda of education disregards the need for the professional development of educators to meet the needs of a multicultural student population or educational equity (Moll & Arnot-Hopffer, 2005; Orfield, 2000).

Moreover, despite the fact that the act of educating is founded in politics, teachers are often viewed as powerless and leadership for social justice is reserved for administrative positions like school principals (Banks, 2007; Jean-Marie et al., 2009; North, 2006; Webb, 2002).

While the newfound role of leadership among teachers may still be developing, they have been conceptualized as holding the capacity and power for meaningful change for quite some time (Webb, Neumann, & Jones, 2004). In fact, Fullan and Steigelbauer (1991) argue change efforts that lack input from teachers in the formulation and implementation processes have simply failed. Despite their potential to motivate reform, if teachers are to behave as educational and social activists they must understand the interplay between power, schooling, and society as well as their own agency to create lasting change within and beyond their classroom walls (Cochran-Smith, 1991; Canestrari & Marlowe, 2005; Ginsburg, 1988; Nieto, 2006; Souto-Manning, 2011; Webb, 2002; Willis, 1978).

In addition to serving as power players in the educational system, teachers have been described as morally obliged to encourage the growth and development of their students (Fullan, 1999; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Moll and Arnot-Hopffer (2005) posit
this ethical dimension to involve the participation in and mediation of the social realities of schooling, which are socially constructed environments subject to the leadership actions of teachers. Thus, teacher leadership should be a focal point in any discussion regarding social justice in public education.

In juxtaposing concepts of teacher leadership with those of social justice leadership, overt consistencies become apparent. For example, Webb et al. (2004) suggest an ongoing rich dialogue that engages the entirety of a school and questions the social, political, and economic forces at play is fundamental to a critical teacher leader who takes serious their responsibility to disrupt oppressive power structures. The authors’ triadic approach to teacher leadership frames critical teachers as the most sophisticated and change-oriented leader. Other scholars agree that teacher leaders must be occupied with interrogating the status quo for change, agency, democracy, and have unique skills involving their care for students, use of voice and communication, and dispositions to courage and vulnerability (see Ackerman & Mackenzie, 2006; Barth, 2001; Fairman & Mackenzie, 2012; Giroux & McLaren, 1996; Gose, 2012; Moore, 2007; Nieto, 2006; York-Barr & Duke, 2004).

Social justice leadership, while still being conceptualized in the field of educational leadership, is equally as concerned with equity (Bogotch, 2002; Theoharis, 2007). Like teacher leaders, social justice leaders are change agents who are persistent, committed, and courageous (Capper et al., 2006; Furman, 2012; Theoharis, 2007). They are concerned with the quality of democracy in their schools and personal practice (Jean-Marie, 2008). Social justice leaders also leverage authentic communication to build
meaningful relationships with others (Jean-Marie, 2008; Shields, 2004). Similar to critical teacher leaders who must use reflection to disrupt oppressive forces (Webb et. al., 2004), social justice leaders practice self-reflection (Brown, 2004; Furman, 2012; Jean-Marie, 2008).

While teacher leaders may qualify as social justice leaders, the two have been consistently conceptualized independently. Much of the literature on social justice leadership is reserved for what are often ambiguously called “educational leaders” (implicitly, school principals) and fail to include teachers among their ranks (see Brown, 2004; Furman, 2012; Jean-Marie, 2008; Jean-Marie et al., 2009; Theoharis, 2007). Rather, the work of teachers often falls under the administrative purview of social justice leadership. For example, Kose (2007) calls upon social justice leaders to monitor the equitability of student learning by encouraging teachers to critically examine their classroom practices. Furman and Shields (2005) identify this exclusive teacher role in social justice as the “pedagogical dimension” of social justice leadership. And, Jean-Marie, Normore, and Brooks (2009) similarly identify critical pedagogy as a function of social justice leadership, but maintain focus on “school leaders” in their article, mentioning teachers only seven times.

Thus, what exists is a theoretical problem in the framing of two concepts: teacher leadership and social justice leadership. While teacher leadership incorporates nearly all of the components of social justice leadership, its scholars fail to identify their subjects as leaders in social justice. Furthermore, scholarship in social justice leadership is not only reflective of that in teacher leadership, but clearly borrows from what is known of
teachers who behave as agents of change (see Theoharis, 2007; Diem & Carpenter, 2012). Like teacher leadership literature, that on social justice leadership fails to explicitly identify teachers as the true agents of their leadership work. Therefore, the need to develop a social justice teacher leadership framework becomes not only apparent, but imperative in empowering teachers to lead in social justice work.

While considering the need for a social justice teacher leadership framework, scholarship must observe the role preservice teachers will play in its employment. If social justice in education involves, as Nieto (2006) posits, an ongoing interrogation of oppressive social structures, the equitable distribution of resources, an understanding of all students as possessing quality assets, and the creation of learning environments invested in social change, teachers must be viewed as essential to the work of social justice leadership. Moreover, their early development as social justice leaders must be taken seriously if teachers’ change agency is to be long-lasting and meaningful (Tuchman & Isaacs, 2011).

The teacher education classroom offers a prime context where concepts of power, change, and the democratic foundation upon which social justice and teacher leadership rest can be understood and negotiated to the benefit of students and in pursuit of educational change (Apple, 1989; Bercaw & Stooksberry, 2004; Moll & Arnot-Hopffer, 2005). Furthermore, scholars find teacher self-efficacy to be most readily influenced by knowledge and experiences acquired in preservice years (Bandura, 1977; Anderson, Greene, & Loewen, 1988; Woolfolk & Hoy, 1990; Tschannen-Moran, Hoy, & Hoy, 1998). The case for the development of a social justice leadership toolkit for future
teachers is further strengthened by findings that self-efficacy established early in teacher training lasts long into teachers’ professional lives (Tuchman & Isaacs, 2011).

Teaching is inherently a complex political and ethical act (Brown, 2005; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Teachers possess power in providing access to resources, learning, and success and transforming a view of differences as deficiencies into one that frames them as resources. This transformation is especially critical considering what is becoming an increasingly diversified student population. Prospective teachers must learn early in their careers that their inaction regarding issues of social justice inherently reproduces educational inequities (Cochran-Smith, 1991; Ginsburg, 1988; Willis, 1978). To feel empowered in their social justice leadership, preservice teachers must understand their integral roles in a larger power struggle and inherited responsibility to reform standard school practices. If education is to be reconstructed into the minister of opportunity it has been so ideally revered, it is incumbent upon the systems of teacher education and leadership to transform the realities of educational and social inequities into action for meaningful and lasting change in the name of social justice.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to investigate how a set of preservice teachers identified as leaders by administrators in their teacher education program conceptualize social justice teacher leadership. While literature on social justice and teacher leadership exists few studies have broached how preservice teachers conceive social justice teacher leadership. Research that does address preservice teacher perceptions of social justice often fail to include a vital leadership component (see Causey, Thomas, & Armento,
2000; Cochran-Smith et al., 2009; Gay & Kirkland, 2003; Moore, 2007; Weisman & Garza, 2002). When leadership is considered, inquiry does not frame preservice teachers as future leaders in their schools and classrooms. Moreover, valuable research has been quantitative in nature and lacks rich descriptions necessary to aptly grasp the perspectives of future teachers.

Nonetheless, works like Brown’s (2004) review are helpful in creating a context for this study. While using the popular ambiguous term “educational leaders”, Brown examines quantitative studies of these educators’ perceptions and preconceptions regarding concepts of social justice, equity, and diversity. She ties in a leadership component by framing educators as future administrative leaders, like many of her colleagues, which suggests that leaders must inevitably hold formal leadership titles. Also useful in understanding related literature, Cochran-Smith, Shakman, Jong, Terrell, Barnatt, and McQuillan’s (2009) research uses qualitative interviews and observations to assess how preservice teachers frame social justice and how such conceptualizations translated to classroom practice in their first few months of teaching. A gap remains, however, as the authors fail to consider leadership components of their subjects’ knowledge and work. Cochran-Smith and her colleagues even propose that it may be unrealistic to expect teachers to act as activists so early in their teaching careers. However, as the teacher self-efficacy research discussed in this study suggests, such a proposition may be ill-supported, as findings point to teachers’ early beliefs as indicative of lasting, future behaviors (Bandura, 1977).
Research Question

As attention to the social justice work of public school education grows, teacher preparation and the nature of teacher leadership must be considered. The existing dearth of research that examines preservice teachers as future leaders in social justice provides a meaningful context for this study. Thus, the following question guided my study: How do leaders identified among undergraduate preservice teachers conceptualize social justice teacher leadership?

Framework

The reflexive process, where the qualitative researcher reflects upon their process of research to examine their influences on outcomes, was a critical component in this project. Initially, a static conceptual framework of social justice teacher leadership was developed and used in this study. This framework was developed through a content analysis of literature in four areas of inquiry: (a) social justice educational leadership, (b) teacher leadership, (c) transformational teacher education, and (d) teaching for social justice.

A review of literature on the social justice work of teachers and teacher education exposed commonalities with conceptualizations of teacher leadership and those of social justice leadership: (a) classroom teachers’ committed and ongoing pursuit of processes involve their own consciousness and that of their students (see Brown, 2004; Furman, 2012; Garmon, 2005; Gay & Kirkland, 2003; Goodwin, 1999); (b) the exposure of oppressive forces in individuals’ lives, schooling, and society (see Giroux, 1992; Swartz, 2003; Zeichner, 1996); (c) the democratic inclusion of voices interested in the lives of
students (see Dantley, 2008; Furman, 2012; Giroux & McLaren, 1996; Maxcy, 1995; Stronge, 2002); and (d) collective action for change (see Brooks et al., 2007; Cochran-Smith, 1991; Furman, 2012; Goldfarb & Grinberg, 2002; Jansen, 2006). Because each field of inquiry frames these themes differently, an analysis was needed to expose tenets of the resulting social justice teacher leadership framework. This construct lies at the intersection of teacher leadership, the social work of teachers, and educational leadership for social justice and offers a new perspective on teaching.

This research study utilized this version of the social justice teacher leadership framework to answer the study’s research questions and positioned it as a tool for future inquiry and practice in the field of social justice education. The first tenet, critical pedagogy, involves teachers’ use of complex sources of information that reflects a breadth of ideas and resources (see Bartolome, 2004; Bercaw & Stooksberry, 2004; Gay & Kirkland, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1997; Nieto, 2000; Hackman, 2005). This method of teaching seeks unconventional educational tools that intentionally avoid the reproduction of oppressive ideals and requires students to engage critically with information. Related tools, critical thinking and analysis of oppression, comprise another tenet and involve the critique of unjust and oppressive social, political, and economic structures (Bartolome, 2004; Gay & Kirkland, 2003; Freire, 1970; Hackman, 2005; Moll & Arnot-Hopffer, 2005). Further, transformative learning is a critical component of social justice teacher leadership and entails the acquisition of new knowledge and manipulation of existing information to disrupt and reshape deeply ingrained ideas and belief structures (see
Brown, 2004; Davis, 2006; Freire, 1970; Gay & Kirkland, 2003; Furman, 2012; Mezirow, 2003; Webb et al., 2004).

The framework also viewed the creation and maintenance of student-centered environments as fundamental to social justice leadership work (see Ayers, 1998; Gay, 2000; Hackman, 2005; Nieto, 2000; Shor, 1986). Such settings recognize and integrate student identities into methods and curriculum (and otherwise) to meet the needs of a unique group. Teacher empowerment and self-efficacy for social justice work involve teachers’ enhanced capacities to reject domination and fully participate in democratic processes (Ashcroft, 1987, Kreisberg, 1992) and couple these with beliefs that their actions produces desirable results (Bandura, 1977; Gibson & Dembo, 1984; Kreisberg, 1992; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). Finally, social justice teacher leadership involves taking action, which means they actively resist, rebel, and reconstruct existing structures in the pursuit of social justice and equity (see Brooks et al., 2007; Cochran-Smith, 1991; Furman, 2012; Goldfarb & Grinberg, 2002; Jansen, 2006).

These six tenets and several related concepts were used to analyze how the cases in this study understood the nature of social justice leadership for teachers and viewed their future work in such leadership. However, in analyzing findings, I quickly came to realize the limitations of the social justice teacher leadership framework I initially developed for this study. Most importantly, its one dimensional nature is insufficient in describing the dynamic, contextually reliant nature of social justice leadership work. What then emerged was a new model, one that honored how social justice work is acknowledged in education and educational leadership - as dynamic and contextually
reliant. Considering broader themes that emerged from my data, I found social justice teacher leadership action to primarily rest on two factors: motivational sources of action (i.e., internal, external, or a combination of both) and leadership approaches to social justice (i.e., authoritative, collaborative, or a combination of both). The continuum that resulted involves five profiles of a social justice teacher leader: (1) the Collegial Actor, (2) Motivated Director, (3) Supportive Team Player, (4) Critical Leader, and (5) Social Justice Teacher Leader. The original framework developed and used in this study is discussed throughout Chapters 2 through 4. In Chapter 5, the emergent framework is detailed.

**Research Design**

Collective qualitative case study methodology was employed in this study. Social justice leadership research almost exclusively utilizes case study methodology (Marshall, Young, & Moll, 2010), as its practice is subjective and codependent on the context within which it operates (Bogotch, 2002; Brooks et al., 2007; Furman, 2012). Because case study allows for the employment of various purposes, methods, and conceptual frames and extracts different understandings in findings, it provides an ideal approach to social justice leadership, which lacks objective models and is continuously being critiqued and reconstructed (Furman, 2012; Bogotch, 2002; Brooks et al., 2007). This study’s collective case study design allows various participants to be understood separately, as possessing unique perspectives and agency, and data to inform its unique conceptual framework and answer research questions.
The University of Missouri (MU) Teacher Development Program (TDP) served as the context for this study and five undergraduate preservice teachers who were identified as leaders in their MU TDP certification programs served as individual cases. Interview data from these cases was used to understand how participants conceptualize social justice teacher leadership. I employed several measures to ensure validity and reliability in the research findings.

**Limitations**

As is the case with all research, this project had a unique set of limitations. First, time constrained this research project. The time frame allocated toward this dissertation allowed for a limited number of cases to be included, which Merriam (2009) concludes can affect compelling interpretation. This affected the scope and scale of the study. With an extended timeframe, this study could have included additional cases to develop more compelling conclusions.

Additionally, the ambiguous and contextual nature of the topic under investigation posed a clear limitation to the study. Not only does social justice teacher leadership lack conceptualization and investigation, its tenets are subjective by nature and can share common characteristics with related concepts. Although qualitative research is interpretive in nature, some intended meaning expressed by interview participants may be lost as they searched for terms to illustrate their thoughts. While my voice, as the researcher, was intended to reflect those of participants’, the two inevitably merged due to the nature of the topic and process of research.
Related to the limitation of interpretation is that of research bias. Merriam (2009) asserts that the use of a human instrument in qualitative research methodology has its shortcomings and introduces biases that may impact the study. Instead of attempting to eliminate such biases, which some may argue is actually impossible, Merriam suggests identifying and monitoring them to determine how they may influence the collection and analysis of data. Researcher positionality is one implicit source of researcher bias. While this influence cannot be eliminated due to the nature of qualitative research, it can be addressed through self-awareness of one’s biases and employment of methodological checks on the validity and reliability of research processes and findings. My unique positionality as a researcher is offered below.

**Researcher Positionality**

Intrinsic interest in related topics led me to pursue this study (Stake, 1995). My interests in issues of social equality served as a profound influence when considering topics for study. Additionally, my position as a student and former graduate instructor with the MU TDP shaped my interest in the program and allowed access to key gatekeepers. Choice of the research topic can also be linked to the fact that the course I taught is the only course in the MU TDP that primarily focuses on issues of diversity and social justice. Clearly, my values and experiences are directly related to my interest in the research questions.

Additionally, my demographic background influenced the study. As a female doctoral student, I came to the field of education through an interest in public service and social work. My curiosity in the field of education stems from ingrained family and
cultural values and a belief that education serves as the most powerful purveyor of opportunity. Additionally, as an American-born daughter of Bangladeshi immigrants having been socialized in predominantly White, Midwestern American settings and having lived experiences from low through middle socioeconomic statuses, I have unique insight into minority status in America, the value of social justice, and power of education.

**Significance of the Study**

This investigation into how preservice teachers frame social justice teacher leadership is significant for a number of reasons. First, it is heuristic in nature and expands what is already known of the social justice work of teachers, teacher leadership, and social justice leadership. By developing a framework that bridges teacher leadership with social justice leadership and the social work teachers have long been known to engage, this study both encourages the treatment of teachers as leaders in social justice and is conceptually influential in the mentioned fields of scholarship.

Additionally, this inquiry further informs research on teacher education and social justice education. By developing a framework for social justice teacher leadership and understanding preservice teacher perspectives and experiences within a teacher education program, findings from this study may be used by teacher preparation program administrators, teacher educators, and prospective teachers to develop teacher education in the interest of social justice and leadership.

Likewise, as leadership preparation programs attend to a growing need to address and engage issues of diversity, this study becomes useful. In attracting students
committed to social work and designing programs with ingrained themes of leadership and social justice, findings from this study may prove valuable in programmatic review and reform for those leadership preparation programs committed to developing leaders for the multicultural future of education. Further, this study pushes leadership programs to qualify preservice and inservice teachers as potential leaders and engage them in efforts to prepare educational leaders for social justice.

**Organization of Dissertation**

This chapter was intended to provide the reader with a synopsis of the current study. The remainder of this dissertation will offer a significant level of detail regarding various components of this research investigation into how a set of preservice teachers identified as leaders frame social justice teacher leadership. The following chapter, Chapter Two, offers an extensive review of literature related to this study. Chapter Three delves into the methodologies utilized throughout the investigation. In the next chapter, Chapter Four, research findings are delineated. Finally, Chapter Five will provide an interpretation of the study’s findings, offer conclusions, and suggest avenues to extend inquiry into social justice teacher leadership.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

As our public school population undergoes increasing diversification, opportunity and achievement gaps increase, and policies and practices in schools perpetuate social inequities, the need to develop social justice-oriented teacher leaders is paramount (Brown, 2004; Furman, 2012; Gose, 2012; Howard, 2010; Jean-Marie et al., 2009). Scholars contend teachers are most malleable in developing orientations toward social justice during their preservice years (Anderson et al., 1988; Bandura, 1977; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998; Woolfolk & Hoy, 1990). During this period, teachers are able to assess their capabilities and the outcomes of their efforts through vicarious experiences, educational literature, and classroom observations that can shape lasting impressions regarding their personal abilities to achieve desired consequences. The current study explores how preservice teachers conceptualize social justice teacher leadership.

This chapter provides a review of the literature on teacher leadership for social justice and the concepts integral to developing preservice teachers into agents of change. First, I address social justice as it pertains to the field of education. Next, insight into the developmental characteristics of preservice teachers grappling with diversity and social justice curriculum are outlined. Then, I discuss teacher and social justice leadership in order to foster an understanding of the attitudes and behaviors that define change agents among everyday teachers. Finally, I describe the social justice teacher leadership framework used to analyze the study’s findings.
Social Justice and Education

As U.S. public schools experience a cultural transformation through an increasingly diversifying student population, social justice has emerged at the forefront of concerns in the American educational system (Furman, 2012; Howard, 2010; Jean-Marie et al., 2009). This shift in focus is supported as data on achievement and economic gaps becomes more abundant. Furthering the need for social justice perspectives in education, scholars continue to find that educational policy and practice is corrupt with bias that systematically disadvantages marginalized students groups and schools are increasingly subjected to the pressures of testing and accountability that steals attention and resources away from efforts to meet the educational and social needs of students (see Anyon, 2005; Delpit, 1995; Howard, 2010).

However, unlike evidence that points to the injustices of inequitable treatment, deprived resources, and unequal outcomes faced by historically marginalized populations, the concept of social justice lacks clarity as it is both a process and a goal and is best understood in the context within which it is employed (Bogotch, 2002; Brown, 2004). Despite scholars’ failure to clearly conceptualize social justice, there remains a need to critique and reform the educational system “in terms of access, power, and privilege based on race, culture, gender, sexual orientation, language, background, ability, and/or socioeconomic position” (Brown, 2004, p. 79). This necessity is made even more critical considering the historical, economic, and structural forces that determine students’ opportunities to obtain quality education in a society that is
experiencing such a drastic demographic shift and remains wrought with inequality (Brown, 2004; Howard, 2010).

**Defining Social Justice**

At its core, social justice concerns itself with addressing and eliminating the marginalization and oppression of groups that are markedly underserved, underrepresented, and undereducated (Dantley & Tillman, 2010; Theoharis, 2007). Social justice has been conceptualized as a process of care, respect, recognition, and empathy as it is charged with interrupting and dismantling social arrangements that oppress, marginalize, and exclude (Gewirtz, 1998). Social justice has also been understood to focus on human rights in various social and personal dimensions (Goldfarb & Grinberg, 2002). This definition theorizes social justice to recognize and alter oppressive processes through active reclamation, appropriation, and preservation of equity, equality, and fairness in personal, educational, economic, and social contexts.

Social justice is often faced with criticisms of being an ambiguous concept that is popular and widespread, while remaining under-theorized and lacking definition (Cochran-Smith et al., 2009). One way to more clearly frame social justice is to identify its three major functions in pursuing justice—distributive, cultural, and associational (Gewirtz & Cribb, 2002). John Rawls’ (1971) Theory of Justice serves as the basis for distributive justice, which involves an equitable, or fair, sharing of social goods. Factors considered in distributive justice include need and capital. Cultural justice takes into account both the absence of cultural domination and the non-recognition of cultural groups and can be understood as emancipation from oppressive practices and policies.
Finally, through associational justice, marginalized groups fully participate in any decision-making that affect their lives (Gewirtz & Cribb, 2002; North, 2006).

The purpose of this study is to develop understanding of how participants conceptualize social justice within the community of teacher leaders. While participants’ perspectives are the heart of this study, I will provide a general definition of social justice as it was used in the framing of this study. The distributive, cultural, and associational functions of social justice outlined by Gewirtz & Cribb (2002) provide an appropriate frame for a basic definition of social justice used in this study. Social justice for its purpose involves an equitable distribution of resources (see Brown, 2004; Rawls, 1971). The primary consideration in dividing shared resources is the need of the individual (Rawls, 1971). Thus, social justice requires the recognition of the various types and levels of capital an individual possesses, which will determine their need and the level to which they are awarded resources. Social justice also involves a community state where all individuals possess equal access to social goods (see Dantley & Tillman, 2010; Goldfarb & Grinberg, 2002; Theoharis, 2007). This implies that any two randomly selected individuals will utilize an equal amount of resources and effort to obtain the same materials or services. Social justice also has a political dimension that involves the equal opportunity to participate in democratic decision making (see Bell, 1997; Freire, 1970; Furman & Shields, 2005; North, 2006). Finally, social justice is a philosophic ideal. While a truly just society is utopian, the concept of social justice serves as an ideal to which social structures should strive.
Social Justice in Schools

Power, politics, history, and culture shape the social ideologies found within our education system, as schooling functions as a site of the ongoing battle over what is known and accepted to be authentic knowledge and culture (Banks, 2007; Darder, 1991; Howard, 2010). Giroux and McLaren (1996) contend schools are empowered in this battle, however, as social transformation begins in the public sphere (e.g., the classroom) and moves on to infiltrate students’ lives beyond school settings. Freire (1970) further argues that while social transformation is not contingent upon education, change cannot occur without it. Thus, just as institutions have power to perpetuate dominant beliefs, they also possess power to examine and reconcile unjust social norms, which is especially true for schools (Bercaw & Stooksberry, 2004).

Despite schools’ power in creating social justice, American public education continues to systematically disadvantage some students while advantaging others (Banks, 2001; Brown, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Nieto, 2006). Research suggests educational opportunities, resources, achievement, and favorable outcomes are disparate when minority or low-income students are compared to their white, middle-class counterparts (Cochran-Smith et al., 2009; Howard, 2010; North, 2006). Scholars like Howard (2010) focus on trends like the achievement gap, which illustrate inconsistencies between the educational experiences and outcomes of racial and cultural minorities and their counterparts. Such work draws the attention of researchers and educators to the source of the problem: the inequitable and methodical distribution of resources in the education system.
Further, although teaching is known as a political action, teachers are often viewed as powerless and leadership for social justice is reserved for positional leaders like school principals (Banks, 2007; Jean-Marie et al., 2009; North, 2006; Webb, 2002). Increasing accountability to mandated policies, of which teachers are legally responsible, leaves little room for accountability to a sociocultural reality of growing diversity in schools (Canestrari & Marlowe, 2005; Moll & Arnot-Hopffer, 2005; Webb, 2002). Therefore, while growing diverse student populations bring with them a need for the effective employment of culturally relevant pedagogy, schools must focus resources and efforts on adhering to political mandates.

Grant and Agosto (2008) posit contemporary theories, which address the multifaceted and complex inequities embedded in our education system, have expanded from Rawls (1971) understanding of social justice as the sharing of social goods to a significantly more complex frame that involves equality, participation, and recognition. These three concepts of social justice had practical applications and were integral in such educational movements as the passage of the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) (Grand & Agosto, 2008). For example, ESEA was designed to address equal opportunity, instruction, and policies regarding the integration of students’ home languages, and the awareness of such racial/ethnic groups as Asian Americans, Native Americans, and African Americans. Equality, participation, and recognition also influenced the funding of Head Start and Teacher Corps programs, in addition to the 2001 reauthorization of ESEA, No Child Left Behind (Grant & Agosto, 2008). For example, Head Start programs recognize poor, minority children and provide access to
various social services, including an enriched educational environment. Additionally, through Title I, ESEA maintains focus on inner city students and has theoretical underpinnings that empower parents and increase school accountability for students’ academic performance. Thus, as social justice has evolved as a theoretical approach to education, its influence can be found throughout educational policy and practice.

Despite what Grant and Agosto (2008) describe as more sophisticated theories of social justice in education, the resource distribution Rawls (1971) conceptualized early on is found to provide solutions to complex problems in schools (Nieto, 2006; North, 2006). Because the structure of schooling reflects that of dominant culture and, in turn, produces unequal economic, political, and cultural circumstances, it is incumbent upon schooling to correct these disparities (Apple, 1989; Banks, 2007; Bercaw & Stooksberry, 2004; Cochran-Smith et al., 2009). Recognizing this cyclical problem, scholars point to teacher education programs interested in addressing social inequality to correct the inherent inequities found in schools, communities, and society by engage curriculum and practice that allows future teachers to examine themselves and society as well as develop transformational plans of action to change existing norms (Apple, 1989; Banks, 2007; Bercaw & Stooksberry, 2004; Cochran-Smith et al., 2009; Nieto; 2006; North, 2006). Such powerful teaching will be addressed later in discussions regarding preservice teachers’ acceptance of social justice teacher leadership orientations.

While scholars agree teacher education is critical to if and the degree to which schools engage social justice, the contemporary reform agenda of education disregards the need for the professional development of educators to meet the needs of a
multicultural student population or educational equity (Moll & Arnot-Hopffer, 2005; Orfield, 2000). Zeichner (2008) attributes this shortcoming to teacher education programs that describe themselves as social justice-based, but fail to take seriously the theoretical foundations and context of social justice. Giroux (1992) asserts teachers must take a social justice stance in their pedagogy and, in doing so, learn how to take an active role in “leading, learning, and reflecting” upon themselves, their teaching, and the relationship between the two as well as and the social context in which their work is situated (p. 99). In doing so, teachers become equitable distributors of opportunity and play a critical role in social justice schooling.

This approach to social justice in schools views teachers as powerful advocates who should be committed to democratic ideals that redistribute educational opportunities (Apple, 1989; Banks, 2007; Bercaw & Stooksberry, 2004; Cochran-Smith et al., 2009; Nieto; 2006; North, 2006). Nieto (2006) expands upon this view and considers role of power and democracy to teaching and education and suggests social justice in education involves four components: (a) challenging and disrupting the misconceptions and fallacies that lead to structural inequality and discrimination based on human differences; (b) providing adequate resources to all students so that they may learn to their full potential; (c) viewing all students as possessing resources (including their languages, cultures, and experiences), talents, and strengths that can be foundational to their learning and leveraging those in school settings; and (d) creating a learning environment invested in critical thinking and supportive of action for social change. The author’s application of social justice to education has observable characteristics that are founded in complex
concepts of power, democracy and opportunity. For example, a social justice education includes teachers’ conscious decisions to include oppression in curriculum and critically evaluate policies and practices like tracking and standardized testing to expose injustices.

Nieto (2006) views teachers as imperative to finding social justice through education and frames them as purveyors of opportunity who hold sight of public education’s potentials and work to correct the many disparities embedded in the system. This distributive orientation founds what scholars Grant and Agosto (2008) characterize as more complex notions of social justice that have influenced educational movements aimed at providing opportunity, access, and empowerment to marginalized populations through schooling. Nonetheless, the distribution of resources, including teachers and their practice, remains critical to the function of social justice in education (Apple, 1989; Banks, 2007; Bercaw & Stooksberry, 2004; Cochran-Smith et al., 2009). If we are to empower teachers to continue such meaningful work, we must consider their early preparation, a time when they begin to develop tools as agents of social justice (Brown, 2004; Cochran-Smith et al., 2009; Milner, 2009; Swartz, 2003)

Preservice Teachers and Social Justice

Teaching with a social justice orientation involves a breadth of knowledge, pedagogical approaches, interpretive frameworks, and advocacy in partnership and on behalf of students, families, colleagues, and communities (Cochran-Smith et al., 2009). This approach includes how teachers view, work, and form relationships with these individuals as well as lenses used to understand their work and the management and structure of schooling. Thus, academic degrees in any specific discipline do not address
the complexities of teaching as teacher education does (Milner, 2010). Furthermore, Milner (2009) considers the cultural conflict that exists between students and teachers and the colorblindness, meritocratic ideals, deficit conceptions and lowered expectations imposed on minority students that are prevalent among preservice and inservice teachers to be problems undertaken in teacher education. Teacher education classrooms may be the only site where future teachers are prepared with the skills and competencies for diverse classrooms and to transform the inequality and marginalization that serve as the foundation of our educational system (Swartz, 2003, p. 263; see also Brown, 2004; Cochran-Smith et al., 2009; Milner, 2009).

It is in teacher education programs that future teachers are equipped with the theoretical foundations and pedagogical toolkits of a transformative framework that will help them develop into future educational leaders committed to social justice and equity (Brown, 2004; Cochran-Smith et al., 2009). Such a framework uses scholarly practice and reflection to educate students to become thoughtful and active citizens (Giroux & McLaren, 1996). More specifically, students “take responsibility for their learning, share a vision for what can be, assess their own assumptions and beliefs, and understand the structural and organic nature of schools,” all of which are hallmarks of effective leadership (Banks, 1994; Brown, 2004, p. 78). Thus, teacher education must construct genuine experiences and offer time for students to negotiate information and views that may push them outside of their comfort zones. Additionally, programs should focus on developing students’ critical consciousness, a state of mind that forces them to critique
and transform the social, political, and economic structures and ideologies to which they may be accustomed (Brown, 2004; Cochran-Smith et al., 2009; Freire, 1970).

The theoretical foundations and pedagogical toolkit for change that comprise the teacher preparation program are inseparable and necessary in the preparing social justice teacher leaders with the knowledge, skill, and ambition to examine how and why the operation of schools marginalize some students while privileging others (Brown, 2004; Nieto, 2000). Only then are soon-to-be teachers prepared to diminish existing inequities in schools and society and act as advocates for their students as they provide access to educational opportunity (Gewirtz & Cribb, 2002).

Research findings suggest students’ resolve in holding onto prior beliefs and knowledge poses a significant challenge to the influence teacher education has on students’ attitudes regarding diversity (Brown, 2004; Causey et al., 2000; Gay & Kirkland, 2003). As teacher educators attempt to assess and foster favorable orientations and practices in teaching, they must first identify obstacles and modes of resistance used by preservice teachers learning concepts of social justice. In fact, Brown (2004) found while the message of social justice education courses and prior personal experiences do influence preservice teachers’ diversity awareness, the method used to address resistance is perhaps more critical as it creates cognitive spaces for awareness. Below is a discussion of the challenges faced in teacher education classrooms that include philosophies of social justice. Following is a delineation of methods teacher preparation programs might use in fostering acceptance of social justice orientations among preservice teachers. The frame offered here is particularly useful in grasping preservice
teachers’ understandings and reactions to concepts of social justice and characterizations of learning experiences from their teacher education programs.

**Obstacles and Resistance to Social Justice Orientations**

Several roadblocks exist in developing preservice teachers’ critical views of change agency. Even though “the experience of change agency” (i.e., action research experiences) is imbedded in teacher education programs, impediments often persist (Price & Valli, 2005, p. 67). For example, Gore and Zeichner (1991) found preservice teachers’ beliefs that academic work is unimportant or irrelevant, unchallenged views of schooling, and personal biographies and cultural beliefs (e.g., individualism, technical rationality, and instrumentalism) threatened how they conceptualized their change agency following an action research project. The authors also warn that caution must be used in understanding what can be accomplished through teacher education as institutions inherently function to regulate people and individuals’ abilities to develop critical perspectives are limited by their sociocultural identities. The discussion below elaborates on obstacles that challenge future teachers’ development of attitudes of change agency.

**Deficit thinking.** Of the theories used to explain school failure among student of color from low socioeconomic backgrounds, deficit thinking has had the longest currency and manifests in a number of ways, including blaming victims of injustices for their situations and using pseudoscience as evidence and justification for inequality (Valencia, 2010). Research suggests preservice teachers engage deficit views, stereotypes, and underdeveloped ideas when framing educational disparities between socioeconomic and racial groups (Castro, 2010; Swartz, 2003). Despite where and how such thinking
manifests, those who adopt deficit points of view believe that difference is inferior and
often view minorities as culturally, intellectually, and morally deprived (Ford, 1996; 
Valencia, 2010).

Further, deficit thinking can result in “inaccurate, incorrect, and harmful
perceptions of diverse students that may prevent these teachers from developing effective
lessons that might better meet the needs of diverse learners” (Milner, 2005, p. 771).
Teachers who hold deficit views often fail to create learning opportunities that challenge
culturally different students by avoiding higher order thinking skills in the curriculum for
those students (Ford, 1996; Milner, 2005, 2010; Valencia, 2010). Additionally, the
deficit perspective restricts teachers from viewing students’ knowledge and backgrounds
as a starting point in the classroom and using students’ strengths to build quality
educational experiences, which further perpetuates educational inequities (Milner, 2005).

**Distractions from evidence.** In addition to deficit thinking, the diversion and
diffusion of attention away from certain issues is a common resistance strategy used by
preservice teachers in courses related to social justice and diversity (Gay & Kirkland. 
2003). Oftentimes, these teachers shift focus in their classes from issues of race to
identity factors like gender, class, and the concept of individuality, suggesting such topics
are more salient to understanding social justice and inequity than race.

Additionally, the discomfort students experience in reaction to challenges to long-
held assumptions, critical self-reflection, an awareness of racist attitudes and practices,
and the deeply ingrained and complex nature of racism is often met with denial of
presented information (Tatum, 1992). For example, Tatum (1992) suggests statistical
information on institutional racism may be met with questions of accuracy and applicability to contemporary society, while qualitative data may meet questions regarding perceived subjective nature.

Instead of critical reflection, students may also offer shallow explanations for why trends exist and things are the way they are (Gay & Kirkland, 2003). For example, preservice teachers often repeat a conventional explanation for the achievement gap without questioning the reasoning behind the explanation they have cited, examining their personal positions, or analyzing how race, class, ethnicity and culture have affected the achievement gap. This is problematic because students are able to actively avoid critical thinking by relying on the sentiments of others, which spreads misinformation. Gay and Kirkland (2003) suggest it seems difficult for teacher education students to challenge their concepts of teaching, which are often laced with ignorance. The outcome of such distracting classroom maneuvers as shifts in focus, denial, and use of conventional explanations, is that students are able to hold fast to their preconceived ideas and readily discount all counter arguments without developing tools for critical thinking.

Values of meritocracy and individualism. Just as preservice teachers may find methods to distract conversations centered on social justice, it is common for them to fail to understand the implications of unearned and inherited privileges, benefits, and consequences (Milner, 2006, Tatum, 1992). Milner (2006) blames personal privileges for the stereotypes preservice teachers internalize and act upon. Because of their privileges, they have not had to think critically about concepts of culture and race or consider their
own experiences and struggles in relation to others. Castro (2010) adds these inherent privileges as well as “beliefs in individualism and meritocracy work hand-in-hand to construct a myth of equality” (p. 207)

Meritocracy is the belief that success, status, and positions of prestige are earned through important and valuable deeds and failure is a result of deficient choices, efforts, and abilities (Milner, 2010). It is founded in a belief that all individuals in society have equal opportunity to earn such benefits. Values of individualism and meritocracy further enable victim blaming, a characteristic of deficit thinking, create barriers to the exposure of oppressive forces in educational systems, and pose challenges to the development of teachers and leaders for social justice (Castro, 2010; Diem & Carpenter, 2012; Weisman & Garza, 2002).

Leadership preparation programs are faced with barriers when educators who hold such beliefs “consider the inability of those striving to succeed to be a direct consequence of the choices they make and the lack of effort they put forward” (Diem & Carpenter, 2012, p. 104). The result is that leaders enable dominant regimes to maintain power instead of considering the potential of privilege (of which many leaders possess themselves), social inequality, and a need to redistribute power. For example, in Diem and Carpenter’s (2012)’s work on race-related conversations in leadership preparation classrooms the authors find that school leaders use a multitude of tactics that allow them to hold fast to their meritocratic ideals (e.g., silence). Leaders’ allow the dominant White race to maintain their unearned privileges when they fail to recognize (even when they
understand) that race has been institutionalized and bears critical significance in our education system.

**Guilt and acknowledgement of injustices.** When confronted with information on historical injustices and their own privileges, preservice teachers who are not busy holding tight to values of meritocracy and individualism often respond with initial acknowledgments of the reality of injustice and privilege and subsequently avoid the subject matter (Gay & Kirkland, 2003; Tatum, 1992). These future teachers lack critical consciousness and stop at acknowledging historic and current tensions involving race, and do nothing to “examine the causes, motivations, depths, and manifestations of their guilt, least of all how to move beyond it, and to ensure that the guilt-provoking actions are not perpetuated in the future” (Gay & Kirkland, 2003, p. 184).

Pewewardy (2005) found students to react to race-related content in multicultural education courses with feelings of guilt, shame, anger, and despair. Moreover, White students often describe themselves as under attack and persecuted by minorities. Even when preservice teachers hold beliefs in equity they are often coupled with oppressive ideologies that can exempt them from action. Tatum (1992) finds the discomfort felt when addressing tensions suppresses any motivations to engage in critical examinations and causes preservice teachers to resist the learning process, while Gay and Kirkland (2003) suggest that preservice teachers often believe awareness of injustices and use feelings of guilt are enough to prove that they value social justice.

The mere acknowledgement of inequalities and feelings such as guilt pose barriers to the growth process that is critical to a preservice teacher leadership concerned
with social justice (Gay & Kirkland, 2003; Pewewardy, 2005). Students confronted with issues of race and culture struggle with self-reflection that is critical and exposes the majority of teachers’ lives as privileged by race and with placing themselves as agents of change within a hegemonic educational system (Cochran-Smith, 1995). An imperative critical analysis of the implications of such knowledge coupled with the development of orientations to remedy oppression and privilege are missing in reflections and students often mire themselves in feelings of guilt, betrayal, anger, and shame (Gay & Kirkland, 2003; Tatum, 1992).

**Normalization of dominant culture.** Along with shallow acknowledgements of injustice, privilege, and guilt, universalist approaches to information that fail to consider the knowledge and experiences of marginalized groups have been critiqued in the field of social justice education (Grant & Wieczorek, 2000). Parsons and Brown (2001) contend that while teacher education attempts a focus on diversity, preservice teachers often evade developing meaningful notions. Instead, the authors find students equate diversity to otherness and that White, female, Christian, middle-class preservice teachers determine diversity to include individuals with identity characteristics unlike themselves. Thus, to them, diversity implied non-Whites, non-Christians, and members of a lower socioeconomic class, with the norm for comparison being themselves. Such an orientation allows these teachers in training to regard (and defend) themselves as “normal”, which implies “they are, in general, kind, generous, well-intentioned people who want to do well and want the world to be a good place” (Parsons & Brown, 2001, p.1). The authors suggest if teacher educators make diversity personal, they will be able
to build bridges with their preservice teachers, connecting diversity to empathy and subsequent action.

Related to the normalization of Whiteness (and other dominant identities), teacher educators often adopt “exemption syndrome”, or beliefs that multicultural education is not necessary if they are working and teaching in White university and college contexts (Grant & Koskela, 1986). This excuses obligations to devote time and other resources to multicultural education and does a disservice to preservice teachers studying under their programs. Castro’s (2010) review of research on preservice teachers’ beliefs on diversity places works including Grant and Koskela’s (1986) study in the initial time period of research, which illustrates a gap in preservice teachers’ learning how to teach in multicultural contexts. This poses a challenge in developing social justice perspectives that respect and integrate the perspectives of marginalized groups and prepare students for a multicultural society because students view multiculturalism as an issue pertinent to only non-Whites. Moreover, minority preservice teachers have also been found to normalize dominant culture, minimize the salience of racism, and characterize schools as purveyors of equal opportunity (Weisman & Garza, 2002). This may be because their success in mainstream institutions demands assimilation and an adoption of dominant perspectives.

**Colorblindness.** Coupled with a normalized dominant culture, critiques of the coercive nature of conventional schooling and orientations toward relevant and culturally appropriate content, methods, and communication are often met with colorblind responses from White preservice teachers (Gay, 2001; Perry & Delpit, 1998; Samovar &
Porter, 1991; Sleeter, 1995). Bonilla-Silva (2001) labels this new type of racism as *colorblind racism* as it enables Whites to maintain their dominant positions and avoid any meaningful analysis of race by excusing away racist phenomena in society. Swartz (2003) identifies the colorblind tactic as a means to de-racialize and, in turn, erase knowledge and experiences central to students’ identities. Such disregard leads prospective teachers to see a fragmented student, which, in turn, allows teachers to know only a fragmented student (Milner, 2005, 2010). “The reality is that people of color (culturally and ethnically diverse individuals) experience the world in different ways than do White people” and it is important for future educators to recognize this if they are to make connections between race and systemic problems often found in schools (Milner, 2005, p. 770).

Viewed differently, those who adopt colorblind perspectives may believe social issues of racism and discrimination may be conquered if individuals simply ignore color (Lorde, 1982). Such colorblindness is motivated by fear and forces teachers to engage myopic pedagogies, as they avoid making issue of race or ethnicity in fear of being viewed as racist or politically incorrect (Milner, 2009). In his study on preservice teachers’ views on diversity and teaching, Milner (2005) found teacher education students may avoid acknowledging and using diversity as a lens in fear they are “making something out of nothing” or, as a participant put it, “making problems where they really did not exist” (p. 777). Pollock (2005) recognizes this dilemma in the way individuals think about race, which is often based in fear. The way educators think about race influences the way they speak (or don’t speak) about it, which ultimately affects how race
is addressed in education. The author argues that if racial equality is a goal of education, teachers must avoid colorblind silence and learn how to speak about race.

When teaching through a colorblind lens, teachers ground their pedagogy in a normalized whiteness found in larger society and, as is the case in larger society, students of color must accept their oppressed identities or craft their own techniques to manage and create voice (Gay, 2001; Milner, 2009; Sleeter, 1995). Such an orientation promotes discrimination and forces students of color to remain disadvantaged by the school system, while adopting aspects of dominant culture in an effort to find success in schools, which operate according to dominant ideologies (Bergerson, 2003; Cochran-Smith, 1995; Guinier & Torres, 2002). Milner (2009) asserts teachers who use colorblindness do not possess the racial awareness to teach diverse students. Sleeter (2001) agrees, suggesting White preservice teachers’ use of colorblindness to deal with fear and ignorance carries over into their classroom practice as multicultural teaching fails to be framed as a technical teaching issue and is often reduced to curricular additions to existing lessons.

**Silenced voices.** In addition to the use of colorblind ideology, personal avoidance through silence is common among preservice teachers and educational leaders who exhibit resistance to curriculum in diversity education courses (Diem & Carpenter, 2012; Giroux, 1997; Ladson-Billings, 1996; Mazzei, 2007). Silence often manifests when students experience guilt, fear, or persecution during conversations of race (Ladson-Billings, 1996; Mazzei, 2007). Like the colorblind perspective, silence has been recognized as a means to preserve privileged positions in society, particularly for Whites (Bonilla-Silva, 2010; Mazzei, 2007). In choosing to remain silent during class
discussions, students may actively avoid analyzing their own thoughts, beliefs, and behaviors about diversity and claim ignorance and lack of experience as disqualifiers in meaningful contribution.

Minimization of explanatory data, by either questioning the validity of issues presented, or shutting down the conversation, by using concepts learned in the course to argue against readings and discussions, are also among silencing resistance strategies employed by preservice teachers presented with curriculum based in social justice (Gay & Kirkland, 2003; Mueller & O’Connor, 2007). Additionally, absenteeism is common, which makes required attendance imperative to students’ learning process of confronting discomfort and realizing institutional realities of inequity (Tatum, 1992). In addition to absenteeism, Tatum (1992) found teacher education students to silence race-based material course material by avoiding exposure through a reduction in reading and written assignment completion. She finds, however, sometimes silence is used to find a temporary break from material that elicits strong emotional reactions and prospective teachers reengage after silencing course material.

**Acceptance of Social Justice Leadership Orientations**

Although preservice teachers have been found to be slow to change preexisting stereotypes and deficit perspectives that underhandly endanger their future practice as educators, teacher education classrooms remain critical in the development of social justice leadership perspectives and attitudes among preservice teachers (Brown, 2004; Gomez, 1996; Milner, 2005). Moreover, views of teachers as agents of change have been said to not only be feasible for those in preservice years, but are superior to nonpolitical,
non-reflective perspectives (Cochran-Smith, 1995; Gore & Zeichner, 1991; Price & Valli, 2005). Cochran-Smith (1995) asserts waiting to be told how to do multicultural education is insufficient in social justice education; teachers must be self-motivated to critically engage their work using their own intelligences and considering contexts. In preservice years, teachers must couple knowledge of practice with a critical view of that practice as well as willingness to act on critiques.

Price and Valli (2005) find if preservice teachers engaging in action research attend to tensions in their work using reflective practice and critical orientations that help them to develop complex understandings of change, they are then well-primed to view themselves as agents of change in their future work. From methods to content to classroom atmosphere, teacher educators are charged with the task of instilling and fostering constructive outlooks and approaches to diversity among their students. The section that follows addresses how social justice teacher leaders may develop into agents of change through a variety of pedagogical approaches focused on fostering personal reflection and positive perspectives on diversity and may be useful in framing how preservice teachers express their ideas and experiences within and outside of their teacher education programs.

**Experiences with diversity.** Researchers have found cultural conflicts, incongruities, inconsistencies, and mismatches between teachers and students to impair learning opportunities for students (Banks, 2001; Delpit, 1995; Howard, 2001). However, knowledge of others and experiences in diverse contexts can be used to mitigate such discord and change preservice teachers’ and leaders’ attitudes and beliefs
about diversity to build a foundation for authentic relationships (Furman, 2012; Garmon, 2005; Milner, 2010). In expanding their frames of reference, teachers enable themselves to operate beyond their own cultural reference points to create convergence between themselves and their students.

Diversity experiences in teacher education may be categorized as intercultural, educational, or support group oriented. Intercultural experiences include “exposure to individuals of different cultural backgrounds” or “personal experience with discrimination as a child or an adult” (Garmon, 2005, p. 279-280). In order to develop meaningful effects, educational experiences must be wide-ranging, long term, and provide appropriate information, experiences and support for future teachers throughout their teacher education programs and into in-service contexts (Barry & Lechner, 1995; Causey et al., 2000; Garmon, 2005; Grant, 1994; Parsons & Brown, 2004; Ukpokodu, 2004). Educational leadership also points to educational experiences with diversity and suggests tools of life histories, diversity panels, and cross-cultural interviews (Brown, 2004; Furman, 2012). Experiences should also involve support groups where students can reflect on their beliefs and talk about diversity issues (Garmon, 2005). Such networks foster growth and change and are usually developed inside the classroom.

**Journaling.** Journaling has been cited as an effective means to developing preservice teachers and leaders for diverse contexts. Such a practice allows for private, thoughtful reflection of attitudes and a means to further dialogue as well as a means to explore how one’s own experiences have shaped ideologies (Weisman & Garza, 2002). In teacher education and leadership preparation, journaling enhances self-analysis, self-
expression, and transformative learning, in addition to a review of issues (Brown, 2004; Cranton, 1994). In social justice leadership preparation, journaling is thought to result in effective problem solving (Furman, 2012). Brown (2004) suggests teacher and leader educators should use critical questions and comments to respond to students’ entries, while reserving judgment. This not only models critical reflective process, which is imperative to teaching for social justice, but pushes students to consider ideas they may not have otherwise. Furthermore, self-directed learning is encouraged when students examine their journals for themes and changes in thinking, feelings, or opinions. In doing so, teachers in training develop awareness of their histories and examine the rationales behind their beliefs and biases and are equipped to change them (Brown, 2004). Gay and Kirkland (2003) further suggest that self-reflection should include opportunities for preservice teachers to find results from the reconfigured beliefs so that they may measure the quality of their efforts and become motivated to continually improve them.

**Critical self-reflection and consciousness.** Teachers and leaders must know who they are as people, understand their teaching and leadership contexts, and interrogate their knowledge and assumptions for instructional and leadership effectiveness in order to be able to engage in the emancipatory nature of education reform (Brown, 2004; Furman, 2012; Garmon, 2005; Gay & Kirkland, 2003; Goodwin, 1999). Critical self-reflection necessitates that teachers and leaders take an active role in examining the democratic nature of decisions and practices as well as the social context within which they operate in such a way that intercepts the perpetuation of oppressive forces (Dantley, 2008;
Furman, 2012; Giroux, 1992; Stronge, 2002). Further, teachers concerned with social justice are able to think critically about “what stands as knowledge, how knowledge is produced, and how knowledge is transformed by a particular relationship between the self, others, and the larger world” (Giroux, 1992, p. 99; Zeichner, 1996).

Critical consciousness is essential for teachers and leaders to create equity for students of color and assist in the construction of cultural responsive teaching skills (Castro, 2010; Furman, 2012; Gay & Kirkland, 2003; Jean-Marie et al., 2009). Further, a critical form of leadership, which fundamentally engages critical consciousness, is naturally participatory, self-critiquing, and involves conscious dialogue, which means no interested participants are precluded from its processes (Freire, 1970; Webb et al., 2004). Webb et al. (2004) assert that critically conscious teacher leaders are responsible for engaging in meaningful dialogue with all other school community members regarding school practices in relation to various contexts – social, cultural, economic, and political. Thus, if preservice teachers are to develop critical consciousness, they must be treated as legitimate collaborators in the educational process (Freire, 1970). Further, modeling self-reflection, correcting students in the process, and committing to building habits, skills and orientations of critical analysis among preservice teachers should be common practice for teacher educators who wish for their students to develop critical consciousness for leadership (Gay & Kirkland, 2003).

**Development of racial and cultural identity.** Knowing one’s self as an individual and as a cultural being facilitates conscious interactions with students, parents, and families, and helps to create partnerships between teachers, students, and support
figures (Zeichner, 1996). When confronting discomfort, those who are in the immature stages of their racial identity development tend to withdraw from experiences with people of color and avoid important issues with responses of guilt, shame and anger (Helms, 1990; Tatum, 1992). This may be especially true to White teachers, many of whom have limited experiences with diversity and often adopt dangerous colorblind perspectives (Milner, 2003). Still, as Diem and Carpenter (2012) submit, however challenging and uncomfortable, leadership preparation programs with genuine commitments to equity will make issues of race, culture, and diversity cornerstones of their curriculum and challenge reluctant professors to critically investigate such issues alongside their students.

Those who work to prepare educational leadership might confront such sensitive topics through well-crafted reflection that involves the entire classroom community (i.e., including professors). Race reflection practices uncover inconspicuous beliefs, perceptions, and experiences and is a process that involves deliberation of racial matters concerning the teacher self and the student (Milner, 2003). The purpose of this ongoing process is to understand the self in relation to others’ racial identities and experiences, reject deficit perspectives and stereotypes, and fight racism and injustice. Finally, Milner suggests both preservice and inservice teachers should use race reflective journals and critically engaged racial dialogue to grapple with their ideas and experiences regarding.

**Continuous learning and connecting theory to practice.** Teaching and learning are said to be inextricably connected (Swartz, 2003). In addition to racial identity development, an openness to new ideas and experiences, or continuous learning, which implies a commitment to expanding a foundational and methodological knowledge base
as well the development of pedagogies situated in students’ cultures and group identities, should also be fostered in preservice years (Brown, 2004; Zeichner, 1996). Furthermore, the integration of theory (which may manifest through continuous learning processes) into practice, using methods mindful of students, is an important component in the long lasting development of educators (Goodwin, 1999). In order for this to occur, teachers must engage in ongoing learning about their students’ cultures (Swartz, 2003). Swartz (2003) argues that ongoing learning of theory, methodology, and culture helps teachers develop pedagogies that best serve their students. Theories and practices should be representative of students and use their ideas to help construct curriculum. In doing so, students learn they matter and that their cultures are represented in the routines of schooling (Zeichner, 1996). Furthermore, teacher preparation programs should introduce realities that connect to theory, which may be accomplished by offering quality field experiences where preservice students are allowed opportunities to scaffold and make connections to classroom learning (Milner, 2006).

Disrupting patterns that lead to resistance in teacher education classrooms and those that perpetuate such obstacles as stereotyping and deficit thinking can be done through the deliberate selection of teacher candidates, including the selection of older applicants, and the placement of students in field contexts which model effective teaching of culturally diverse students (Haberman, 1991; Larke, Wiseman, & Bradley, 1990). Such practices diversify the teaching force as well as the perspectives teachers gain in preservice years. Research suggests preservice teachers of color, who are starkly underrepresented in among teacher education students, hold strong commitments and
ideas concerning teaching in culturally diverse contexts (Quiocho & Rios, 2000; Villegas & Davis, 2008). Further, as Quiocho and Rios (2000) assert “many ethnic teachers come to the profession with socio-cultural experiences that lead them to see society (and schools, by extension) as being unfair…while not automatic or guaranteed, most of these teachers quickly embrace a social justice framework” (p. 517). Thus, the serious and successful recruitment of students of color to teacher education programs would disrupt resistance patterns and obstacles that impede the preparation of social justice teacher leaders.

Additionally, if preservice teachers are to develop skills and orientations in the interest of social justice, they must learn that teaching is much more than a technical craft by understanding it to be a highly contextualized and moral procedure of which they have the power to manipulate (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993; Danielewicz, 2001; Gay & Kirkland, 2003; Palmer, 1998; Parsons & Brown, 2001). Parsons and Brown (YEAR) assert that the institution of education is purposed with influencing individuals and, in turn, society. Thus, educators’ responsibility to the state of culture only makes more critical teaching’s moral imperative. Similarly, Jean-Marie’s (2008) study of secondary school leaders found that their ideal of quality education involved the moral purpose of social justice and does not conflate learning for all children with measurable student achievement. Rather, in pursuit of quality education, the principals described decision making that was less prescribed and more ethical and affected change outside of school bounds and into the community.
The aforementioned practices and orientations collectively serve one purpose: to prepare teachers as social justice leaders. However, these practices may be futile if teachers themselves do not feel inherent connections to the plight of social justice in public education. Teacher self-efficacy becomes imperative to the ongoing and meaningful implementation of its leadership. In the next section I elaborate on the concept of teacher self-efficacy and its relationship to social justice work.

**Teacher Self-Efficacy and Social Justice**

Fundamental to understanding and acting on forces of power, democracy, change, and empowerment is the salience of teacher efficacy. This involves teachers’ beliefs regarding personal capacities to organize and execute courses of action required to successfully accomplish a specific teaching task in a particular context (Bandura, 1977; Gibson & Dembo, 1984; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). Agency, or action, related to change is contingent upon this identity factor of self-efficacy. Moore (2007) found preservice teacher identity to be integral to their views of self as motivators of change. Further, students who did not view themselves as agents of change, failed also to view themselves as teachers. Conversely, students who did view themselves as change agents also saw themselves as teachers during their preservice work. Moore’s findings point to the significance of relationship between future teachers’ self-identities and related agency.

Teacher self-efficacy, as it relates to social justice leadership, may include beliefs regarding one’s personal abilities to successfully create change, shift power relationships, and foster democratic practices in their classrooms and schools. Bandura (1977) finds
four sources of information to be integral in how teachers analyze teaching tasks and
develop self-perceptions of teaching competence: mastery experiences, psychological and
emotional arousal, vicarious experience, and social persuasion. Mastery experiences
refer to teacher interpretations of the results of their performance of a particular task
while arousal refers to the nature of their feelings while performing any given task.
Teacher self-efficacy is impacted through vicarious experiences as they watch a task
being modeled. The model’s success in performing the desired task then influences
teacher confidence in doing the same. Finally, the judgments of others influence teacher
self-efficacy. The social persuasion of negative feedback is found to be more powerful
than that of positive feedback. The self-efficacy that results from any combination of
these sources then influences such critical factors as the levels of personal effort exerted
in teacher work, persistence when facing obstacles, resilience when confronted with
failure, and stress resulting from challenging situations (Bandura, 1977).

Studies using this construct have looked at how such efficacy might be fostered
through the formal training and student teaching experiences of preservice teachers as
well as the impact informal educational experiences have on teacher self-efficacy
(Fortman & Pontius, 2000; Tuchman & Isaacs, 2011; Woolfolk & Hoy, 1990). Findings
suggest such experiences are important in the formation of positive self-efficacy among
preservice teachers. Perhaps most impressive is the finding that the efficacy effects of
such experiences are lasting. Tuchman and Isaacs’ (2011) found the majority of
participating senior teachers’ efficacy beliefs to be most related to preservice experiences.
Thus, the importance of building positive self-efficacy in teachers’ preservice years is critical to the development of lasting attitudes and orientations.

Zeichner (1996) contends effective teachers empower themselves as producers of knowledge, using accurate, comprehensive and culturally reflective scholarship that is appropriate considering the identities of their students. While this view of teachers’ self-efficacy as a determinant of teaching behavior may be a simple idea, it remains powerful as it is one of few consistent relationships found between student behavior and learning and teacher characteristics (Henson, 2001; Woolfolk & Hoy, 1990). Students with self-efficacious teachers generally outperform students in other classes (Henson, 2001). Furthermore, research suggests teacher self-efficacy is found to influence student performance on standardized tests (see Anderson et al., 1988; Moore & Esselman, 1992; Ross, 1995). Student motivation and self-efficacy have also been found to be related to teacher self-efficacy (Anderson et al., 1988; Midgley, Feldlaufer, & Eccles, 1989).

Self-efficacy influences the way teachers behave in their classrooms as well. Researchers found self-efficacy to encourage teacher persistence, enthusiasm, creativity, openness, and effort in classroom settings (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998; Viel-Ruma, Houchins, Jolivette, & Benson, 2010). For example, self-efficacious teachers experiment with and pursue improved instructional methods and materials, keeping in mind the needs of their students (Allinder, 1994; Guskey, 1988; Shore, 2004; Yeo, Ang, Chong, Huan, & Quck, 2008). They also withhold criticism when students offer incorrect answers more often and persist with struggling students longer, in comparison to their counterparts (Gibson & Dembo, 1984).
Regarding students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, such teachers express placements in regular educational settings are important and are less likely to refer these students for special education (Meijer & Foster, 1988; Podell & Soodak, 1993). This may be attributed to research findings that suggest the self-efficacy of teachers influences their expectations and confidence of student performance as well as their own abilities to perform classroom duties and problem solve (Gibson & Dembo, 1984; Klassen, Usher, & Bong, 2010; Shore, 2004; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998; Viel-Ruma et al., 2010). Teachers with high self-efficacy also encourage democratic classroom environments, where students are invited take part in classroom decision making, and have a more positive attitude toward teaching and their students, which is reflected in their discipline and classroom management practices that are often crafted in collaboration with students (Gibson & Dembo, 1984; Shore, 2004; Tuchman & Isaacs, 2011).

Self-efficacy among preservice teachers is linked to attitudes toward children and control (Willower, Eidell, & Hoy, 1967; Woolfolk & Hoy, 1990). Research suggests preservice teachers who held orientations toward control, negative views of student motivation, reliance on strict classroom rules, external reward systems, and punishment to encourage study behaviors also have low levels of efficacy. Alternatively, participants who hold humanistic control orientations possess high self-efficacy beliefs and, when placed in classroom settings, these views of capability impact their classroom behavior. Practicum evaluations illustrate such efficacious preservice teachers to rate more positively in such areas as classroom management, lesson presentation, and questioning.
behaviors than their less efficacious, custodial control-oriented peers (Saklofske, Michaluk, & Randhawa, 1988).

Once efficacy beliefs are established, often from past experiences and school culture, they are seemingly resistant to change (Prothero, 2008; Ross, 1998; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998; Tuchman & Isaacs, 2011). This may be attributed to the cyclical nature of efficacy, as higher levels of efficacy lead to increased effort and persistence, which leads to better performance and ultimately, high levels of efficacy (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998; Tuchman & Isaacs, 2011). This resilience is not easily weakened by experiences of failure or challenges (Bandura, 1977; Tuchman & Isaacs, 2011). Opposite effects are found among teachers with lower levels of efficacy. However, research also suggests teacher efficacy is most malleable in preservice years as conceptualizations of personal abilities to achieve favorable outcomes are founded during this time (Anderson et al., 1988; Bandura, 1977; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998; Woolfolk & Hoy, 1990).

Researchers suggest self-efficacy is positively influenced by actual teaching experiences as prospective teachers receive convincing feedback that dismantles preexisting beliefs regarding performance incapability, something that gains stability with experience (Anderson et al., 1988; Bandura, 1977; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998; Tuchman & Isaacs, 2011; Woolfolk & Hoy, 1990). Due to the malleable nature of self-efficacy during preservice years, teacher education programs should offer more opportunities for actual, dynamic classroom instructional and management experiences along with performance feedback that focuses on attributions that vary and can be controlled by the teaching intern (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998; Tuchman & Isaacs,
Further, the positive self-efficacy beliefs that result from such experiences and feedback in their preservice years is exacerbated in the first year of teaching if teachers are assigned small classes with more capable students (Henson, 2001; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). The same is true into later years of teaching if teachers are allowed professional development opportunities that encourage them to think critically about their classrooms and actively engage change in their instruction and behavior.

Preservice teachers and their experiences are of particular interest to teacher self-efficacy scholars, as early development is key in establishing long-lasting, positive personal beliefs of capability (Tuchman & Isaacs, 2011). When considering the highly contextual and personally challenging nature of social justice work, keen attention to preservice teacher self-efficacy is further justified. Thus, the case for understanding how future teachers both understand social justice leadership as it relates to the profession and their self-efficacy to employ its tenets is warranted. The following section offers a frame for understanding teacher leadership for social justice by delving into existing literature on teacher leadership and attempting to create a connection to social justice leadership.

**Teachers, Leadership, and Social Justice**

At the turn of the millennium, teachers assumed a new role in schools: while they were once expected to be led they are now acquiring positions of leadership in school reform (Webb, et al., 2004). In fact, Fullan and Steigelbauer (1991) argue change efforts that lack input from teachers in formulation and implementation processes have simply failed. While the newfound role of leadership among teachers may still be developing, teachers have been conceptualized as holding the capacity and power for meaningful
change for quite some time (Webb et al., 2004). The 1986 Carnegie Report on Education, *A Nation Prepared*, clearly called teachers into leadership roles within their schools, citing reform efforts to be rooted in classrooms and with teachers. Since then, there has been an effort to grasp the nature of teacher leadership and the central role it plays in creating change for opportunity and equity in schools.

Teacher leaders have been described as a school’s conscience and inseparable from the health of a school (Ackerman & Mackenzie, 2006; Barth, 2001). Thus, it stands to reason that teacher leadership is defined by the context of the individual school (Angelle & DeHart, 2011). Moll and Arnot-Hopffer (2005) place special attention on context and suggest a school’s sociocultural wellbeing can be directly linked to the teacher leadership that resides within it and strengthened through several characteristics of the institution. The authors posit a highly qualified teaching force, with certifications and degrees to support teachers’ classroom initiatives, is vital in offering academic direction, cultivating supportive environments where students are protected, and facilitating desirable social settings. Additionally, mutual trust must be built between administrators, teachers, and students to set the cultural tone of the school. In doing so, administrators solicit and incorporate teacher input regarding the school’s pedagogical and policy decisions. This administrative action then affects how teachers view themselves and manage the educational relationships in the school, which creates school culture.

Finally, teachers must have what Moll and Arnot-Hopffer (2005) call *ideological clarity*: they must be aware of the political dynamics of teaching, actively defend their
choices, and leverage social networks to take a political stance. An example of ideological clarity might involve a teacher who identifies a need for a weekend meal program for students. She or he would consider the social and political context of their community and school as well as the support such programming might receive. A feasible plan including established program alliances rallied in her or his school and community would then be developed to both effectively execute the plan and to publicly express need and support for such community-based school action. Together, these characteristics determine the social and cultural health of a school, which scholars classify as an interest of teacher leaders (Ackerman & Mackenzie, 2006; Barth, 2001; Moll & Arnot-Hopffer, 2005). Further, the consciousness of school context in identifying the need, support, and feasibility of such a program points to teacher leadership, as it is currently conceptualized, driving the project (Angelle & DeHart, 2011).

In the following section, I review the literature on teacher leadership and teaching for social justice and suggest the two are inextricably linked. First, I discuss the research on teacher leadership, followed by a three-part model delineating such leadership. This model is intended to move the reader into understanding mature and effective teacher leadership as both critical and committed to functions of social justice. I end this section by outlining qualities of teacher leaders who act as agents of change. This section intends to illustrate to readers that while literature separates teacher leadership from the social justice work of teachers, the two areas of inquiry clearly reflect each other, suggesting teachers have been social justice leaders in practice.
The Evolution of Teacher Leadership

Over time, teacher leadership has been conceptualized and re-conceptualized and has come to be known as an umbrella term, encompassing a variety of orientations and definitions (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Silva, Gimbert, and Nolan (2000) dissect the evolution of teacher leadership into three waves, while Pounder (2006) suggests a fourth wave exists. This construction began as teacher leadership was understood as a formal role and could be found in such positions as department heads and union representatives (Pounder, 2006; Silva, et al., 2000; Wasley, 1991). Teacher leaders in the first wave were seen as managers who extend the reach of administration to more efficiently and effectively employ school operations and teacher control was at the core of the teacher leader. In the second wave, teacher leadership was placed more closely to the teaching function. Teachers were appointed to leadership roles where their skills as practitioners could be leveraged and identified as curriculum leaders and mentors to new teachers; the instructional dimension of teaching was emphasized in the concept of teacher leadership during its second era.

In the third wave and arguably the current wave, teacher leadership is employed both inside and outside of classrooms (Ash & Persall, 2000). Evolving from their roles as skilled practitioners, teacher leaders are charged with shaping school culture with a deeper understanding that collaboration and continuous development are necessary to improve classroom instruction (Darling-Hammond, 1988; Silva, et al., 2000). While solid definitions are lacking, teacher leadership in this wave consistently involves
leveraging teacher expertise to improve school culture and practice so that students may
better learn (Helterbran, 2010; York-Barr & Duke, 2004).

Pounder (2006) contends teacher leadership has moved into a fourth wave as
“third wave teacher leaders influence colleagues without the formal trappings of
leadership but by qualities, characteristics and approaches that are reminiscent of the
transformational leadership construct” (p. 538). Based on Bass’ (1985) profile of
transformational leadership, Pounder (2006) indirectly suggests teacher leadership
currently involves an inherent view and action toward social justice as it is tasked with
meaningful change. Transformational leadership, according to Bass (1985), involves a
personal idealized influence or charisma, the individual consideration of others, abilities
to motivate through inspiration, and an intellectual dynamic where old ideas are
reworked. Further, this transformational wave draws upon a consensus of characteristics
of third wave teacher leaders as motivators of change, challengers of the status quo,
coachers, modelers, mentors, and inspirers, all of which can be linked to social justice
work (Darling-Hammond, 1988; Pounder, 2006; Silva, et al., 2000).

Teacher leaders assume a breadth of roles, acting independently and in concert
with individuals, groups, and the larger educational system (Fairman & Mackenzie, 2012;
leadership practice to include coordination and management, school or district curriculum
work, professional development of colleagues, participation in school
change/improvement, parent and community involvement, contributions to the
profession, and preservice teacher education. Under these domains, examples of formal
leadership roles involve teachers acting as mentors, curriculum specialists, department chairs, and group representatives, while informal, or emergent, teacher leadership roles are intrinsically motivated and promise continued professional learning and growth in the school (Helterbran, 2010; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Informal leadership involves such actions as modeling effective practices, communicating visions for improvements, and coaching colleagues to solve problems. Despite the varied nature of teacher leader practices and possibilities, their focus remains on bettering the practice of teaching and effectiveness of learning for students (Fairman & Mackenzie, 2012; York-Barr & Duke, 2004).

Barth (2001) suggests teacher leadership is most necessary and least visible among activities involving curriculum decision making, setting standards for student behavior, involvement in school level planning, and engagement of structures and policies determining student access to opportunity. Helterbran (2010) further asserts the true essence of teacher leadership to involve informal roles, where teachers identify problems and utilize their initiative, vision, and resources to address them.

In support of this view, Wasley (1991) found teachers who serve in informal leadership roles to be more readily recognized and embraced as school leaders and concluded informal teacher leaders work well with other teachers and are reflective in their practice and its effects on student learning. Crowther, Kaagen, Ferguson, and Hann’s (2002) study further deemphasized teacher leaders’ positions or titles in favor of an exploration of how they lead. They found teacher leaders who earned respect from their colleagues and administrators for the impact on the school and community to: (a)
express philosophies regarding a better world; (b) attempt to develop authenticity in their teaching, learning, and assessment roles; (c) engage organizational processes to facilitate communities of learning; (d) challenge barriers in their school’s organization and culture; (e) enact ideas into sustainable plans and programs; and (f) foster a culture of success. Further, their research affirms the nature of leadership varies from teacher to teacher in terms of methods and domains of influence. The notable differences between this work and early scholarship on teacher leadership highlights the evolution of this construct. In its earliest notions, teacher leadership was characterized as an extension of control for building administration. In its second wave, however, teachers were viewed as instructional leaders who had agency as practitioners. Currently, the reach of teacher leadership extends beyond the classroom and schools and engages community, culture, and change.

A Triadic Approach to Teacher Leadership

The management, transformation, and ultimate reformation of American schools are complex endeavors. To better understand the role teachers play in this course, Webb, Neumann, and Jones (2004) offer a triadic model of teacher leadership, which frames the roles of teacher leaders as their purposes and contexts shift toward action and social justice (see Figure 1). While teachers are essentially never viewed as leaders in social justice, this model offers a visual guide in understanding how maturity in teacher leadership relates to functions of social justice. Further, Webb et al.’s (2004) framework lays groundwork for the development of a social justice teacher leadership construct.
The authors theorize teacher leaders move in and out of three casts of leadership – transactional, transformational, and critical – and may use aspects of all three, depending on their leadership maturity, to address a particular leadership problem (Webb et al., 2004). In their preservice years, leaders who express more mature leadership conceptualizations are better equipped to employ its tasks than those who fail to identify leadership as a critical process (Brown, 2004; Webb et al., 2004). This frame helps establish knowledge regarding the maturation of teacher leadership conceptualizations and allows connections to be made between preservice teachers’ understandings of teacher leadership and social justice.

Figure 1. Triadic Model of Teacher Leadership. Adapted from Webb, Neumann, and Jones (2004).
The transactional approach. Using Burns’ (1978) transactional leadership as the source decision-making processes, the triadic model focuses on exchanges between leaders and followers (Northouse, 2010; Webb et al., 2004). In employing this form of leadership, teachers concern themselves with efficiency as they maintain and direct their work through heroism and charisma and seek an exchange from followers to further their visions (Webb et al., 2004). Further, Webb et al. (2004) find that teachers’ professional efficacy is affected by their ability to act as transactional leaders, as they maintain control over the culture of the group. The researchers argue this form of leadership is limited in its ability to transform schools as it lacks consensus on the nature of a good school. In considering the social justice work of teachers, the transactional approach to teacher leadership lacks critical dynamics, such as the leveraging of power and the development of collegial trust, which is integral to the sociocultural wellbeing of a school (Moll & Arnot-Hopffer, 2005).

The transformational approach. Transformational leadership, however, does more to “shape, alter, and elevate the motives and goals” of teacher leaders and their followers (Webb et al., 2004, p. 257). This type of leadership involves the engagement with others that encourages motivation and morality in leaders and followers (Northouse, 2010). Followers’ needs and motives are attended to as leaders attempt to empower them. Teacher leaders who are transformational are tasked with raising the consciousness of followers and to encourage them to transcend their own self-interests for the sake of others (Webb et al., 2004). Furthermore, the vision that is in focus is one that is a collective creation, where the community members negotiate change, facilitated
by the transformational teacher leader (Northouse, 2010; Webb et al., 2004). Webb et al. (2004) found this approach to leadership to create a more democratic school culture, where teacher leaders initiate change and engage the participation of followers, and an organizational focus on improvement. They also find the success of this type of leader to be contingent on the degree to which the teacher leader is critical in her or his reflection and action.

In considering the social justice work of teachers, transformational leadership seems directly connected to those teachers who behave as agents of change in their schools and communities. Fundamental to social justice are all of the concepts of equity, change, partnership, morality, and democracy also found in this form of leadership. Critical consciousness, though not explicitly identified as a process of this type of leadership, may be employed by a transformational leader who reflects, acts, and motivates followers (i.e., colleagues and students) to view and transcend larger social, economic, and political forces. Thus, the relationship between transformational teacher leadership and social justice teacher leadership may be, at least, highly reflective of one another and, at most, two concepts that are used interchangeably.

**The critical approach.** The third conceptualization of leadership in Webb et al.’s (2004) triadic model, critical leadership, involves the emancipation of all group members with whom the teacher leader engages. In order for critical teacher leadership to manifest, all members must be empowered, engage in critical dialogue that exposes biases and inequities in the community, and work collaboratively to develop a plan to emancipate the group from oppressive forces (Webb et al., 2004). In order to facilitate
critical leadership, power must neither manifest itself as influence nor authority, giving students meaningful participation in democratic processes. Portin (1999) posits critical leadership to be the most difficult to define, yet fundamental to the role of agency in the work of teacher leaders. Addressing this duality, Webb et al. (2004) suggest:

As difficult as it may be to realize the goals associated with critical leadership, teachers need to claim the role of critical leader so they can better understand the power of the content they teach, and better empower their students’ and themselves within school as well as in society. (p. 261)

Critical leaders are not accountable to traditional leadership roles and even possess a type of power that departs from both transactional and transformational leaders (Webb et al., 2004). What critical leadership does involve, however, is the responsibility to disrupt oppressive power structures and dialogue that questions the social, cultural, economic, and political practices of schooling and engages all members of the school community (Webb et al., 2004).

Coupled with transformational leadership, critical leadership offers a more dynamic process that cannot be fully employed and understood without aspects of the other. For example, where transformational teacher leaders empower their followers and encourage them to act on behalf of others’ interests by raising their awareness, critical teacher leaders actively work with empowered colleagues to free others from oppressive forces (i.e., students). While Webb et al.’s (2004) triadic model of teacher leadership provides tools, strategies, and practices that are responsive to and may be mixed and matched to address unique demands placed on schools and teachers, the transformational
and critical leadership approaches are distinctive as they offer advanced frameworks for school reform in the name of social justice. Thus, social justice teacher leaders might be best understood by Webb and his colleagues as critical transformationalists who move transformational leadership qualities into action by deliberately leveraging reflective practices, emancipative ideals, and power. The next section continues the discussion of teacher leadership, but shifts focus to its social justice characteristics. This is done to further illustrate the connection between teacher leadership for social justice and social justice leadership.

**Teacher Leaders as Agents of Change**

Inherent to the profile of the teacher leader are characteristics of and orientations toward social justice. The literature cited in this section is derived from research on teacher leadership and the social justice work of teachers. As the following section illustrates, social justice educational leaders are unique in their identity as change agents, democratic ideals, caring nature in relationships, as well as their commitment, persistence, and courage in the quest for change (Furman, 2012). And, while regarded separately from social justice leaders, this review exposes that literature on teacher leaders and the social justice work of teachers reflects many of the same properties.

**Creating change for better schools.** On a broad perspective, teacher leaders concern themselves with the gap between the real and ideal school, and are compelled by notions of idealism to challenge the status quo (Ackerman & Mackenzie, 2006). They encourage their colleagues to change and actively question traditional approaches to education (Gose, 2012; Wasley, 1991). For example, teacher leaders might recognize the
impacts of such forces as hidden curriculum and cultural capital on students’ navigation of the school system (Apple, 1989; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Jackson, 1968). They understand school and classroom rules, routines, and regulations demand that students comply and conform to find school success and pursue reforms that expose fundamental biases as they not only disrespect students’ unique identities and needs, but undermine the equity with which they engage students (Gose, 2012).

As teachers are prepared to challenge the deeply ingrained inequities in schools and society, they must understand teaching to be a political activity and, in their pursuit for change, teach against the grain (Cochran-Smith, 1991). Scholars emphasize it is not that teachers should politicize their profession, but they should understand it to be inherently political and their actions to be value-laden by nature (Bruner, 1996; Cochran-Smith, 1991; Nieto, 2006). Their choice to leverage the politics of teaching in pursuit of progress further supports the view that teacher leaders are inherently behave as agents of change.

**Moving teacher agency to action.** Inextricably linked to creating change in education is the concept of teacher agency. At its core, agency includes maintaining control over one’s behavior, action that is purposeful, critical, and reflective, and has been described as a conscious role in enacting social change (Calabrese Barton, 2001; Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998; Moore, 2007). Additionally, people with agency are both self-motivated and self-directed and cannot separate their action from conditions, or context (Archer, 2000; Usher & Edwards, 1994). These action-based orientations are critical to teaching, especially in diverse contexts, fall under the
conceptualization of teacher agency, and are critical to social justice education (Moore, 2007).

Juxtaposing a review of literature on teacher leadership against their own findings regarding the nature of teacher leadership, Fairman and Mackenzie (2012) found teacher leaders to be “internally driven to expand their professional knowledge and skills, experiment, take risks, seek feedback from colleagues and question their own or others’ practices, all because of their strong interest in improving the condition and outcomes of student learning” (p. 230). Such teacher agency is integral to relationship building, resource gathering, and barrier removing, which are all functions of teacher leadership employed to better student experiences and outcomes (Angelle & DeHart, 2011; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Coupling this concept of agency, or the drive to action, with change, teacher leaders who behave in the interest of their students, to mitigate and remedy the inherent inequities of the educational system fall under the conceptualization of change agents.

**Building democratic environments.** In addition to taking action in the interest of change, teacher leaders take on responsibility to ensure school reforms are founded in classroom functions and enrich the learning and experiences of all students (Ackerman & Mackenzie, 2006; Barth, 2001). Such leadership responsibility produces benefits seen school-wide, such as the facilitation of a democratic environment, extension of the capacities of principals, and better decision-making across the school (Barth, 2001; Giroux & McLaren, 1996). Further, teacher leaders are found to frame themselves as public servants and education as significant to democracy (Nieto, 2006).
The democratic community fostered by teacher leaders involves the engagement of all members of a school, operating with the interest of the common good (Furman & Shields, 2005). More specifically, it involves the belief in the value and dignity of individuals, their ideas, and participation, the respect for freedom, intelligence, and investigation, and the responsibility of individuals to collectively explore and choose methods of collaborative action (Furman & Shields, 2005; Giroux & McLaren, 1996; Maxcy, 1995). Furman and Shields (2005) suggest this conception of democratic community is interdependent with that of social justice, as one is impossible without the other; each is fundamentally concerned with both individual rights and the welfare of the community.

**Fostering voice and open communication.** Fundamental to the democratic ideals teacher leaders internalize, the concept of voice is imperative to the notion of such leadership (Ackerman & Mackenzie, 2006). Shields (2004) argues if social justice is a concern of schools, educators must overcome silences about the differences in student’s lived experiences, which are often related to such factors as socioeconomic status and ethnicity. Voice does not only imply speaking up, or avoiding silence in contentious situations, but “staying the course and looking for ways to deepen and expand others’ understanding of thorny issues” (p. 67). Ackerman and Mackenzie (2006) dub this marriage of voice and commitment staying true to one’s beliefs. Further, leaders’ voices can be used collectively to achieve common goals (Barth, 2006). Leaders may assume less visible roles, further back in line, while maintaining influence as part of a group by
participating in school functions, writing letters, signing petitions, and speaking up in meetings.

Teacher leadership involves the development of interpersonal skills as teachers constructively develop their colleagues’ skills and understanding (Ackerman & Mackenzie, 2006). In achieving success in reform, teacher leaders must fight the isolated nature of their profession and reach out and model for others while avoiding terse communication tactics in favor of open discourse where all parties “listen, hear, trust, and remain open to one another” (p. 68). Finally, leading by example is important as others are offered constant and visible models of hope, fervor, and persistence through observation of teacher leaders’ classroom practices, collective reflection, and open exchanges of practical knowledge occurs (Barth, 2001).

Facing vulnerability with courage. In leveraging voice, teacher leaders open themselves up to vulnerability by taking risks and challenging the status quo, which inherently involves courage (Ackerman & Mackenzie, 2006; Gose, 2012; West, 2006). Teacher leaders challenge the status quo and advocate for their beliefs may be ill-received, or resented, by colleagues and administrators, causing them to feel vulnerable and alone (Ackerman & Mackenzie, 2006; West, 2006). In fact, Nieto (2006) found teachers in her study to report advocacy and risk-taking as fundamental to their views of teaching and posits teachers are challenged to develop the courage to confront dominant systems of power.

Ackerman and Mackenzie (2006) found in the face of these feelings of vulnerability and isolation, teacher leaders may weigh the benefits of speaking up with
the cost of being viewed as an instigator of problems. This cognitive dissonance involves courage as leaders are willing to make themselves vulnerable again and again (West, 2006). Barth (2006) suggests teachers who are successful at influencing their schools possess commitments that are more resolved than the obstacles they encounter; they are tireless and undeterred and must accept that change happens incrementally. This may occur because committed teachers who challenge themselves to the benefit of their work have an exceptional capacity of care for their students.

Expressing care through educational equity. Ultimately, teachers who separate themselves from others help improve the quality of students’ lives (Gose, 2012). When asked why they teach, teacher leaders in Nieto’s (2006) study reported on the care they have for their students. To them, care extended beyond an emotional attachment and into respect for students (including their backgrounds and identities) and resulted in holding them to high expectations. Noddings (2012), a scholar on the ethics of care, would regard the research subjects in Nieto’s work as relational carers. Further, the subjects’ regard of emotional attachment as a more superficial form of care is a sentiment with which Noddings (2012) would likely agree. She explains when teachers seem to know what their students need and are persistent in helping them succeed based on those beliefs, they often obtain “moral credit for caring” (p.773). However, Noddings (2012) argues such teachers are virtue carers who act on assumed needs instead of those expressed to them, which often causes them to miss the mark when serving the needs of students. In attending to the needs expressed by students, teachers become relational carers as they are receptive and attentive of students’ needs.
Relational caring allows teachers to lead using equitable practices that recognize and meet the expressed needs of their students (Noddings, 2012). While assumed needs may hold less weight in the ethics of caring, Noddings recognizes they do have practical significance. Teachers must help their students acquire some universal knowledge and skills if they are to succeed in society (Noddings, 2012). However, even the practice of teaching with equity may require teachers to act on assumed needs to best serve their students. For example, Nieto (2006) recognized that the care participants in her study had for their students moved them to maintain high expectations, a standard based on an assumed need that ultimately benefits the student.

Scholars agree teacher leaders not only genuinely get to know and care for students, they are also invested in their communities and make concerted attempts to relate community dynamics to the classroom, while also broadening students’ world perspectives (Ackerman & Mackenzie, 2006; Barth, 2001; Gose, 2012). Although culturally relevant pedagogy is not likely to be a need explicitly expressed by students and is largely driven by the virtue of teacher leaders, its design requires relational care as it is founded on aspects personal to students’ lives. “Care is a key ingredient in good teaching and it underscores the fact that even in difficult situations, teachers’ relationships with their students make a difference” (Nieto, 2006, p. 6). Caring for their students pushes great teacher leaders to recognize that some students may head toward Ivy League universities and others toward parenthood and challenge each to exceed their current expectations (Gose, 2012). Inherent to this act of uniquely impacting each student’s welfare is a commitment to the long-term best interests of each student.
Additionally, great teacher leaders engage the concept of equity by recognizing the unique strengths and needs of each student and then crafting opportunities that reflect those strengths and needs.

This portion of the literature review has a complex task. First, it addressed how teacher leadership as evolved to is current framework as being transformational and informal in nature, concerned with change and social justice, and extending its reach outside of school walls. Then, discussion focused on the parallels between literature on teacher leadership and teachers as agents of change, positioning teachers as active leaders in social justice. Next, I continued framing this problem that bars scholars from viewing teachers (including those in preservice years) as social justice leaders.

The following section addresses educational leadership for social justice as it is currently framed in literature. This segue is intended to lead the reader through the parallels that exist between two theories, which are currently distinctly conceptualized: teacher leadership for social justice and social justice educational leadership. Unmistakable consistencies between these areas of inquiry found an argument for the development of a social justice teacher leadership framework. Further, in considering that social justice leadership preparation clearly borrows from scholarship on teacher preparation, the case for such a framework is practically indisputable. As Webb et al. (2004) asserts, “Precluding teachers from leadership roles” in social justice “only serves to deny them roles they practice anyway” (p. 261).
Social Justice Leadership

The moral obligations of school leaders and processes that foster equitable school practices and outcomes for marginalized groups are the focus of social justice in educational contexts (Evans, 2007; Furman, 2003). Yet, social justice has not been directly transferred into educational leadership practice as the meaning is not clearly defined within the field (Bogotch, 2002; Brooks et al., 2007). In fact, the nature of social justice involves continuous examination and reinvention of educational practices and policies. Therefore, objective leadership models do not exist and new research (typically in the form of case study) consistently emerges with nuanced definitions of social justice leadership (Bogotch, 2002; Brooks et al., 2007; Furman, 2012). Thus, social justice becomes a construct dependent upon and inseparable from the leadership context and has been described as a critical cornerstone to educational equity (Bogotch, 2002; Brooks et al., 2007; Furman, 2012; Marshall et al., 2010). Theoharis (2007) recognizes the “complex and multidimensional” nature of social justice leadership in education and warns preparation program administrators to avoid regarding its known components as tasks on a list to check off.

Good Leaders versus Social Justice Leaders

In his article on social justice leadership as a resistance strategy among school principals, Theoharis (2007) takes the opportunity to include A Final Word following a concluding discussion of his research findings. Here, Theoharis makes a point to distinguish a good school leader from a socially just leader, arguing “it takes more than
what traditionally has been understood as good leadership to achieve greater equity” (p. 253). He goes on to articulate:

… leadership that is not focused on and successful at creating more just and equitable schools for marginalized students is indeed not good leadership. I caution us all to consider that decades of good leadership have created and sanctioned unjust and inequitable schools.

Theoharis provides hope, however, as his own research contributes to emerging scholarship on the topic. With a focus on the preparation of school leaders for social justice, which was limited to principals in this study, he posits that once good leadership involves equitable practice, a basis for social justice leadership materializes.

The theoretical distinctions between a good leader and socially just leader are based in Theoharis’ personal reflections instead of an explicit set of empirical evidence (see Table 1). Nevertheless, he references findings from his 2007 work as illustrative of the more sophisticated and favorable type of (social justice) leadership. Generally, a good leader engages school and community diversity in decision making processes, values research evidence, and is invested creating a school environment where needs and voices are heard. A social justice leader does all of these with more focus and effort toward equity. For example, while a good leader may acknowledge that students have different needs, a social justice leader takes that knowledge further in understanding the role community and instructional differentiation have in meeting those needs.
### Distinctions between a Good Leader and a Social Justice Leader

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Good Leader</th>
<th>Social Justice Leader</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✓ Works with subpublics to connect with community</td>
<td>✓ Places significant value on diversity, deeply learns about and understands that diversity, and extends cultural respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Speaks of success for all children</td>
<td>✓ Ends segregated and pull-out programs that prohibit both emotional and academic success for marginalized children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Supports variety of programs for diverse learners</td>
<td>✓ Strengthens core teaching and curriculum and insures that diverse students have access to that core</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Facilitates professional development in best practices</td>
<td>✓ Embeds professional development in collaborative structures and context that tries to make sense of race, class, gender, and disability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Builds collective vision of a great school</td>
<td>✓ Knows that school cannot be great until the students with the greatest struggles are given the same rich opportunities both academically and socially as their more privileged peers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Empowers staff and works collaboratively</td>
<td>✓ Demands that every child will be successful but collaboratively address the problems of how to achieve that success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Networks and builds coalitions</td>
<td>✓ Seeks out other activist administrators (or teachers) who can and will sustain her or him</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Uses data to understand the realities of the school</td>
<td>✓ Sees all data through a lens of equity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Understands that children have individual needs</td>
<td>✓ Knows that building community and differentiation are tools to ensure that all students achieve success together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Works long and hard to make a great school</td>
<td>✓ Becomes intertwined with the life, community, and soul of the school</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Further, Theoharis (2007) positions raising student achievement as a primary concern of social justice leadership as it is the foundation of improvements needed for marginalized students. Three subthemes of study participants’ social justice leadership included (a) improving school structures, (b) re-centering and enhancing staff capacity, and (c) strengthening school culture and community. In juxtaposing these findings to his theory, it becomes apparent that Theoharis’ conceptualization of social justice leadership is empirically informed. For example, findings suggest principals in his study made attempts to utilize collaborative professional development that made sense of personal identities that affect student’s learning and schooling experiences (e.g., race, class, gender, ability) by increasing staff capacity. One study participant used book groups, shared personal racial autobiographies, and professional development programs on White privilege and English language learning to incite discussions and build knowledge about educational equity among her building faculty and staff. Theoharis (2007) suggests such activities are exemplary of social justice leaders and, while not explicitly relating them to his framework, help to distinguish them from good leaders, who might, for example, focus professional development activities on educational technology to facilitate best practices.

As the case for a social justice teacher leadership framework is built, the theoretical inspiration of Theoharis’ (2007) distinctions holds marked significance. As the author explains, the separation between good and socially just leadership mirrors one between good and culturally relevant teaching, as conceptualized by Ladson-Billings (1995). And, just as a divide between the concepts of good and better is attended to in
both authors’ works, a divide between social justice leadership for principals and one that includes teachers exists. However, while the authors may rightfully argue in favor of better school practices (i.e., social justice leadership and culturally relevant pedagogy) over those that are simply good, the same cannot be done between principals and teachers.

The problem that emerges here is a conceptual one. While Theoharis’ theoretical interest is the ill-defined nature of social justice leadership in schools, he and his colleagues maintain focus on principals. Likewise, however, Ladson-Billings’ (1995) work centers on a critical function of social justice in schools: teachers’ use of culturally relevant pedagogy. While one exists as a tenet of another (culturally relevant pedagogy of social justice leadership), those who employ the methodologies are consistently made distinct in social justice education literature. As discussed throughout this literature review, teachers are known for their work in social justice and as leaders, but never as social justice leaders. On the other hand, principals are explicitly and implicitly (through seemingly strategic use of the term “educational leaders”) recognized for their status as leaders in social justice. To add confusion to this nonsensical division, scholarship on teaching for social justice and teacher leadership ages that of social justice leadership.

In sum, as these two constructs are compared, one consistency (social justice work) and two disparities (school professionals’ positional status and their regard as leaders) emerge. What remains is the assumption that positional status begets leadership status, which the existence of a body of research on teacher leadership negates (see Ackerman & Mackenzie, 2006; Angelle & Dehart, 2011; Crowther et al., 2002; Fairman
& Mackenzie, 2012; Lambert, 2003; Muijis & Harris, 2003; Silva et al., 2000; Pounder, 2006; Webb et al., 2004; Wilson, 1993; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Theoharis’ (2007) admitted inspiration from Ladson-Billings (1995) theoretical distinction serves as a perfect illustration of the lag educational leadership scholarship has behind teacher/teaching scholarship in addressing issues of social justice and giving credence to the social justice work of teachers and the leadership that is inherent to those roles. The remainder of this chapter will attempt to narrow this gap by, first, identifying teachers and their work as natural functions of social justice leadership. Then, attention will be paid to the dearth of research in this area. This chapter will then conclude with a construction of the social justice teacher leadership framework, which emerges from a content review of the mentioned, disjointed areas of literature.

**Locating Teachers among Social Justice Leaders**

From their research on the realities of teaching from the teacher perspective, Lieberman and Miller (2004) offer three transformational shifts that have the potential to reform teaching and schools for social justice. First, teachers must shift how they view teaching as an individual endeavor to one belonging to a professional community. With this change in teaching perspective, norms of trust, openness, collegiality, experimentation, risk taking, and feedback are built as teaching becomes a more public action and professional responsibility and accountability result. Through this process, teachers bring their work to a public forum, sharing it, exposing it to critique, and allowing it to be built upon.
The authors also contend that teachers must begin to view themselves as learners. In collaborating to evaluate student work and cultivate shared knowledge, confidence, and power, teachers who view themselves as learners find themselves able to transform processes of teaching and schooling (Lieberman & Miller; 2004). Finally, as opposed to viewing their work as technical, teachers must actively engage inquiry and leadership to create changes in schooling.

Whether teachers who behave as change agents have in the past or continue to heed Lieberman and Miller’s (2004) advice, it remains clear that their work is reflective of social justice leadership. Below is an effort to further illustrate this connection through an outline of social justice leadership. The profile offered is, by nature, clearly reminiscent of teaching for social justice as well as teacher leadership and highlights the need for a social justice teacher leadership framework. In her synthesis of literature on social justice leadership, Furman (2012) offers a set of themes by which the concept may be understood. These themes are borrowed to frame work done on social justice leadership.

**Action-oriented and transformative.** Literature on social justice leadership most commonly describes these leaders as action-oriented and transformative (Furman, 2012). In other words, socially just leaders are change agents who are not afraid to consistently resist, rebel against, and reconstruct the oppressive power arrangements they expose through their critical awareness in an effort to create meaningful change in their schools (Brooks et al., 2007; Furman, 2012; Goldfarb & Grinberg, 2002; Jansen, 2006;). In his research, Theoharis (2007) highlights the agency of social justice leaders by
making note of the “proactive strategies” they employed in the work, including developing a supportive network, collaborating for change, and pursuing professional learning. Moreover, he consistently found social justice leaders to encourage improvements in school culture and structure. Leaders (in this case, principals) were active in increasing academic rigor, access to educational opportunities, and raising the expectations of students and accountability to achievement. Theoharis also states that social justice leaders work to eliminate oppressive school structures (i.e., student tracking) and employ inclusive practices (i.e., the integration of special education students into mainstream classrooms).

**Committed and persistent.** A commitment to a socially just agenda and persistence in actions are also necessary in social justice leadership (Furman, 2012). Issues to which social justice leaders are committed include equity, respect, care, justice, and social inclusion (Theoharis, 2007). Capper, Theoharis, and Sebastian (2006) recognize that leaders’ beliefs, values, and commitments are often used interchangeably in social justice leadership literature and propose the use of critical consciousness as an imperative quality of social justice leadership. The authors argue social justice consciousness must be ingrained in school leaders’ commitments (and do not distinguish critical consciousness from social justice consciousness). Social justice consciousness, they posit, involves a “deep understanding of power relations and social construction including white privilege, heterosexism, poverty, misogyny, and ethnocentrism” (p. 213). Further, in maintaining social justice consciousness, leaders must practice persistence, which is said to be exemplary of their courage (Capper, Theoharis, & Sebastian, 2006;
Jansen, 2006). These leadership convictions of “persistence, commitment, and courage are especially important given the inevitable barriers and resistance to social justice work in schools” (Furman, 2012, p. 196).

**Inclusive and democratic.** Socially just leaders also engage inclusive practices, which involve creating spaces for democratic processes (Furman, 2012). Jean-Marie (2008) found social justice leaders to promote discourse involving social justice in their schools. Participants in her study were both open to critique of their work and engaged in democratic dialogue and practice, as Lieberman and Miller (2004) suggest is critical to the development of transformational teacher leadership. Democratic practices found in Jean-Marie’s (2008) work include the development of work relationships that are collaborative, self-reflective, and critical.

The democratic and transformative culture that results, in turn, empowers staff and community members and created conditions where they, along with students, developed the critical consciousness and courage necessary in their own transcendence (Jean-Marie, 2008). Further, the inclusion of marginalized groups in such democratic processes as decision-making procedures has been found to provide opportunities for the empowerment and creation of democratic spaces described as cornerstones of social justice work (Goldfarb & Grinberg, 2002; Theoharis, 2007).

**Relationships and communication.** Relationship building and authentic communication have also been identified as key in social justice leadership (Theoharis, 2007). The development of caring relationships, which fosters meaningful communication, requires leaders to engage in dialogue that creates an environment where
reciprocity is valued. Jean-Marie (2008) found social justice leaders to express their interest in student success by developing authentic relationships with them, which they used to foster students’ unique strengths that were valuable to their communities and society. Communicative learning is vital to the process of relationship building as it is founded in understanding (Mezirow, 2003). Furthermore, the process of understanding is vital to social justice as it “involves assessing claims to rightness, sincerity, authenticity, and appropriateness rather than assessing a truth claim” (Mezirow, 2003, p. 59).

Shields (2004) further highlights the importance of relationships and authentic communication in the leadership pursuit of social justice. She argues that if relationships are at the core of educational equity, then open dialogue that acknowledges the identities of students must be used and continually fostered. Relationships are vital because social justice pedagogy and democratic educational communities rest understandings of individual students, which cannot be attained without meaningful relationships. Coupled with this is a moral dialogue that is imperative for educators to make sense of differing lived experiences and worldviews. This kind of authentic communication, Shields suggests, requires educators overcome tendencies of silence and foster openness to discussions centered on difference (e.g., ethnicity and class).

**Critical self-reflection.** Critical self-reflection is integral to social justice leadership as it exposes assumptions and inspires awareness and growth among leaders (Brown, 2004; Furman, 2012). Thorough deconstruction of personal values, assumptions and beliefs leaders face prejudices they may have developed as a result of their backgrounds and experiences. Furthermore, social justice leaders are unique as they have
been found to be critical of equitable nature of their own democratic processes and even open themselves up to critique from others (Jean-Marie, 2008).

To understand critical self-reflection in the context of social justice leadership in more depth, the transformative property of leadership preparation must be understood (see Brown, 2004; Shields, 2004). Mezirow’s (2003) theory regarding the transformative learning experiences of adults rests on critical self-reflection and the ability to assess assumptions and expectations that support one’s values, beliefs, and feelings. This learning process, when used consistently, becomes key to social justice leadership as it “transforms problematic frames of reference – sets of fixed assumptions and expectations (habits of mind, meaning perspectives, mindsets) – to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, reflective, and emotionally able to change” (p. 58).

Social justice pedagogy. Finally, social justice pedagogy is necessary in social justice leadership and gives credence to the social justice work of teachers (Furman, 2012). Kose (2007) expresses the dominance of social justice leaders over teachers, calling social justice leaders to continuously examine the equitability of student learning and asking them to “encourage teachers to critically examine” their practices and student learning in an effort to expose bias that harms students along demographic lines (p. 279). Furman and Shields (2005) seem to support the separation of teachers from social justice leaders, and calls this a “pedagogical dimension” of social justice leadership. This element involves the continuous engagement of socially just pedagogy, which is necessary as teachers remain proactive in situating and organizing classroom instruction and re-conceptualizing curriculum to serve the values of social justice.
Furman and Shields’ (2005) and Kose (2007) call for teachers to critically and continuously examine classroom content and practices shadows the tenets of critical pedagogy, which Jean-Marie et al. (2009) posit as a function of social justice leadership. This approach to teaching involves a reformation of traditional student-teacher relationships to involve a learning environment where the experiences of students are equally as honored as those of teachers and new knowledge is created through the exchange of meaningful dialogue and experiences (Freire, 1998). Jean-Marie et al. (2009) contend Shields’ (2004) dialogic leadership offers a solution, through critical pedagogy, to what Freire (1998) suggests is a problem of banking in education, where students are understood be the passive recipients of knowledge from their powerful and more knowledgeable teachers and are disempowered in school settings. Dialogic leadership, which involves sense-making, relationships, and open communication, empowers students to both speak critically about oppression on a number of levels and to transcend that oppression toward social justice and creates a learning and teaching environment of reciprocity (Jean-Marie et al., 2009; Shields, 2004).

Additionally, culturally responsive leadership, reminiscent of the culturally relativity Ladson-Billings (1995) outlines in her definition of good teaching, was found among school leadership (i.e., principals) in Jean-Marie’s (2008) study. Not unlike the work of culturally relative teachers, these leaders were said to embody cultural responsiveness as they considered various perspectives when considering issues, modeled student-centered approaches, and engaged socially just practices.
This literature review has attempted to develop a clear connection between the social justice work of teachers, conceptualizations of teacher leadership that include themes social justice, and social justice leadership. The assumption of this work is that social justice leadership research, while sometimes giving mention to the work of teachers, has failed to explicitly consider teachers as leaders in social justice. Ultimately, literature in these areas, though clearly overlapping, fails to name or consistently distinguish a clear concept of social justice teacher leadership. The remaining sections of this chapter addresses what work has addressed this concept and the framework I used in this study to better understand the social justice teacher leader.

**The Research Gap: Future Teachers and Social Justice Teacher Leadership**

This literature review intended to establish a scholarly context for the current study. As the purpose of this study was to investigate how preservice teacher leaders conceptualize social justice teacher leadership, this review addressed scholarship in several areas pertaining to this topic. First, an overview of literature on preservice teachers and social justice education was offered, followed by an investigation into research at the intersection of teacher leadership and its related social justice work. Finally, I outlined principle philosophies of the scholarship on social justice educational leadership.

What remains is a review of work regarding preservice teachers, leadership, and social justice as they are understood together. Yet, a search for qualitative research on preservice teachers’ understandings of social justice teacher leadership yields no results and establishes an obvious need for this study. Research that addresses preservice
teacher perceptions of social justice and its allied concepts (e.g., diversity, equity, culture, race) fails to include a component regarding these students’ capacity for leadership (see Barry & Lechner, 1995; Cochran-Smith et al., 2009; Milner, 2006; Moore, 2007; Price & Valli, 2005; Weisman & Garza, 2002). Additionally, scholarship on the preparation of leaders (preservice and inservice) for social justice analyzes and is explicitly and implicitly intended for educational administration/leadership programs (see Bogotch, 2002; Capper et al., 2009; Diem & Carpenter, 2012; Jean-Marie et al., 2009; Kose, 2011).

It is apparent that existing research in this area is limited in its approach as it consistently neglects the leadership practice and potential of teachers of training. Nevertheless, this body of work serves two purposes for the current project: (a) together, it establishes a scholarly environment within which this study may be relatively and, thus, more completely understood, and (b) It illustrates a gap in existing inquiry, which offers an opportunity to strengthen the practical processes surrounding teacher preparation for social justice leadership. Below, I outline four studies that share approaches with this study and center on the investigation of ideas and perspectives, but are limited in some way.

Valuable work in this arena has had methodological constraints. For example, quantitative approaches to understanding research subjects’ views of social justice issues simply lack the rich, descriptive data critical to aptly grasping how individuals think, which research suggests is a compelling predictor of behavior (Bandura, 1977). Nevertheless, works like Brown’s (2004) review are helpful in creating a context for this study. While blurring the lines between administrators and classroom teachers (by using
the term “preservice leaders”), Brown reviews a set of 10 quantitative studies regarding educators’ beliefs, attitudes, perceptions, and preconceptions of social justice, equity and diversity. In addition to using a quantitative design, the focus of her work is less on reviewed studies’ findings than it is the quantitative measures used to perform assessments in those studies. Additionally, Brown is explicit in naming those she considers preservice leaders, stating she sought to include studies regarding the perceptions of inservice teachers, principals and administrators (not preservice teachers). And, while she includes classroom teachers among the ranks of preservice leaders, she frames their leadership potential as future administrators instead of leaders in their own right. The current research is designed in a manner that addresses gaps in Brown’s work. First, it uses qualitative methodology, which enables descript meaning to be known. Additionally, it recognizes the potential of preservice teachers to act as future leaders in social justice and gives value to their perspectives.

Additionally, valuable work on social justice teacher leadership has been conceptual in nature and lacks an empirical approach. For example, Grant and Agosto (2008) perform a valuable literature review that centers on the intersection of teacher capacity and social justice in teacher education. Teacher capacity generally refers to knowledge, skills, and dispositions and, when framed through a social justice lens, the authors’ analysis reveals such capacity for social justice mirrors Nieto’s (2006) assertions regarding teaching and teacher education for social justice. This is valuable work as it provides a consensus of existing research that informs a critical dynamic of the current research study. Grant and Agosto (2008) along with Nieto (2006) assert meaningful
teaching for social justice must include seven complex components: (a) critical pedagogy, (b) community and collaboration, (c) reflection, (d) critical consciousness, (e) social change and change agents, (f) culture and identity, (g) analysis of power. In some way, all of these factors influence how teachers know, use, and regard social justice work. However, while this work helps to inform the current research study, it is first limited by its theoretical design. Additionally, while Grant and Agosto (2008) recognize the change agency of preservice teachers and are uniquely interested in their capacities for social justice, they, like many of their colleagues, fail to recognize future teachers’ capacities for leadership in such work, a factor that is unique to the current inquiry.

As addressed, scholarship consistently fails to frame preservice teachers as leaders. For example, while Cochran-Smith, et al. (2009) utilize qualitative interviews and observations to assess how preservice teachers frame social justice and how such understanding was translated to classroom practice in their first few months of teaching, they fail to consider leadership components of their subjects’ knowledge and work. The authors propose that it may be unrealistic to expect teachers to act as activists (i.e., leaders) so early in their teaching careers; however, research on the significance of teacher self-efficacy suggests that early beliefs are indicative of lasting, future behaviors (Bandura, 1977). Thus, this work restricts the legitimated capacity of preservice teachers by making an implicit assumption that dispositions toward leadership and activism can only begin to manifest once teachers have entered the profession. The current work discounts such a notion and recognizes preservice teachers’ conceptualizations of social
justice teacher leadership and framing themselves as future leaders in social justice are critical to their development as such.

Further, work that adopts an unconventional frame of social justice leadership by including teacher perspectives also fails to legitimize the views of those same teachers in their preservice years. Larrabee and Morehead’s (2010) research may suggest the authors use a perspective closely related to that of this study. However, a closer analysis reveals their work engages certified, inservice teachers enrolled in a graduate teacher education program. Using 18 graduate students’ unguided written reflections following a guest lecture on lesbian, bisexual, and gay (LBG) issues in education as data, the authors performed an analysis in search of emergent themes.

The design of Larrabee and Morehead’s study is limited in terms of social justice leadership yet two related concepts did surface. Participants expressed notions of teacher leadership and cultural context in their advocacy for LGB students, which provides evidence to support some findings in my study. Six participants reflected on their capacities for leadership and did so in several ways. One cited duty as a teacher leader as a motivation to support and guide LGB students, while another accepted the role of change agent when it came to influencing school culture. Correcting students’ language was how another participant framed their leadership activities and three others reflected on the actions they might take to create safe spaces. Finally, teacher leadership was described by one participant as having open discussions with administrators and educating students about LGB issues as well as having courage when confronting parents’ criticisms. In terms of cultural contexts, three participants used the historical
injustices imposed on other social groups (e.g., Black Americans) to inform their arguments for a more robust search for LBG justice. While Larrabee and Morehead maintain a social justice orientation in their work, the nature of the data restricted findings to reactions to course content instead of personal convictions and perspectives regarding LGB issues, instead of broader views of social justice.

While the current research focuses on preservice teachers in its inquiry and, in doing so, views them holding potential for social justice leadership, it also allows explores broader concepts related to social justice teacher leadership, which may be used to understand perspectives on ancillary constructs, like LBG justice. Considering the limitations of existing research on preservice teachers’ conceptualizations of social justice teacher leadership, the following section offers a framework to better understand how social justice leadership may be used to shape curriculum and experiences in teacher education programs. It takes into consideration literature on teacher leadership and social justice leadership to create an approach preservice teachers might use in understanding and building their future work as school and classroom leaders in social justice.

**A Framework of Social Justice Teacher Leadership**

Social justice teacher leaders are purposeful, action-oriented, and reflective. They know themselves and their students, take responsibility for student learning, and resist attempts to be silenced (Lambert, 2003). Considering this understanding of a social justice teacher leader, Nieto’s (2006) examined the teaching ideals, orientations, values, and sensibilities of a group of teachers who were particularly committed to and passionate about the craft of teaching and worked with students from diverse
backgrounds to develop a profile of a social justice teacher leader. She found social justice teacher leaders to possess a sense of mission. In doing so, teachers may identify such endeavors as pursuing democracy, the public good, or possibility in their work. Additionally, these teacher leaders care for and respect their students while maintaining high standards. Such teachers also challenge mainstream knowledge, or *regimes of truth*, and the limitations they impose upon students (Foucault, 1980; Nieto, 2006). The result of such active educating is found in teachers’ nuanced understandings of complicated educational and social issues and engagement with different perspectives.

Nieto (2006) also found the preparation for uncertainty to emerge as a characteristic of social justice teacher leaders. Preparation, according to Nieto, involves understanding frameworks, models, and rubrics as a means to effective instruction, instead of ends in and of themselves. Finally, such teachers are described as sharing a passion for social justice. In defining social justice in the classroom, some of Nieto’s study participants viewed it as involving the confrontation of difficult topics through curriculum while others identified its place in the schools as necessary because of the evidence of power in the act of teaching. At the crux of these conceptualizations lies the understanding that teachers and school leaders possess responsibilities inherent to their power positions requiring action for change.

Further explaining such responsibility, scholars in the field of social justice education suggest teachers possess a moral imperative to affect the growth and development of their students (Evans, 2007; Fullan, 1999; Furman, 2003; Gay & Kirkland, 2003; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). As teaching is a complex, political and ethical
act, these classroom leaders have the power to provide access to learning and academic success and transform the view of differences as deficits into one that perceives differences as resources (Brown, 2005; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Thus, it is incumbent upon teacher educators to not only educate preservice teachers on the role schools play in perpetuating social inequities, but to develop their senses of change agency and to rebuild education as a source of opportunity. Such a drive to act is developed from a sense of self-efficacy, which is most malleable in teachers’ preservice years and extends far and deep into teachers’ work lives (Bandura, 1977; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). Cochran-Smith (1991) likens change agency to teaching against the grain and suggests:

…teachers have to understand and work both within and around the culture of teaching and the politics of schooling at their particular schools and within their larger school systems and communities. They cannot simply announce better ways of doing things, as outsiders are likely to do. They have to teach differently without judging the ways others teach or dismissing the ideas others espouse. (p. 284)

Villegas and Lucas (2002) suggest teaching against the grain is possible if those who educate teachers take seriously their responsibilities to teach about the processes of and obstacles to change. They must place emphasis on the moral property of teaching, encourage the development of personal visions of education and teaching, and provide evidence of change in schools. Furthermore, teacher educators must foster feelings of empathy for students, especially those from marginalized backgrounds, encourage
idealism in their abilities to change students’ lives, and promote activism inside and outside of classrooms.

Social justice in educational contexts strives toward an equitable distribution of resources in society through challenging obstacles that lie in the way of students’ full freedom and humanity (Ayers, 1998; Bell, 1997). Given this understanding, teachers, as purveyors of information, possess inherent capacities act as social justice leaders. Intensive examination of beliefs and critical analyses of the profession are necessary to prepare teacher leaders who practice social justice (Brown, 2005). Furthermore, the idea that social transformation begins in the classroom and then infiltrates students’ lives outside of the classroom provides a basis for teacher leaders committed to social justice (Giroux & McLaren, 1996).

From the perspective of social justice, teaching practice involves an amalgam of knowledge; interpretive frameworks; teaching strategies, methods, and skills; and advocacy with and for students, parents, colleagues, and communities (Cochran-Smith et al., 2009). This includes not only classroom pedagogy, but also how teachers frame their work and interpret trends in classrooms and schools. Furthermore, teaching for social justice involves how teachers propose questions, conduct decision-making, form relationships, and work with students, families, colleagues, communities, and social groups. Understanding teaching as a political act suggests that, in training, teachers must develop a knowledge base of how schooling involves and influences power and society (Canestrari & Marlowe, 2005; Souto-Manning, 2011; Webb, 2002). Finally, social
justice teacher leaders must actively develop mature conceptualizations of power, democracy, change and empowerment, as they influence classrooms and schools.

**The Social Justice Teacher Leadership Framework**

Scholarship from social justice teacher education, teacher leadership as it intersects with social justice work, and social justice leadership were used to develop a framework for social justice teacher leadership. More specifically, a content review of over 60 journal articles and book chapters across these arenas of research was used to develop the social justice teacher leadership framework. In synthesizing the social justice work of teachers, conceptualizations of teacher leadership and those of social justice leadership, social justice teacher leadership emerges as the committed and ongoing pursuit of classroom teachers to processes involving their own consciousness and that of their students; the exposure of oppressive forces in individuals’ lives, schooling, and society; the democratic inclusion of voices interested in the lives of students; and collective action for change. The social justice teacher leader does not view their classroom as a haven or silo, where students are safe from the realities of their real lives. Instead, they seek authentic understanding of students’ lived experiences and couples those with the truths of an oppressive society where their students must participate in discriminatory structures. The social justice teacher leader then creates opportunities for empowered students to understand and negotiate the inevitabilities of their world.

Outlined below are essential characteristics and pursuits found in such a leader’s toolkit. The tenets of this toolkit served as a framework for the data analysis processes of this study and will be revisited in Chapter Four in the reporting of research findings.
While this construct was informed through a literature review of existing research in relative areas, throughout this study’s inquiry its concepts served as broad themes that emergent research data further defined.

**Critical pedagogy.** Because information is the foundation of learning content mastery is a critical component of effective social justice education (Hackman, 2005). Students require complex sources of information in order to engage positive, proactive change. If teachers are to behave as social justice leaders, this complex information must reflect a breadth of ideas and information that extend beyond the educational sources to which students are conventionally exposed (e.g., media, family, textbooks). Additionally, information must intentionally avoid the reproduction of dominant, hegemonic ideals and require students to engage critically with information presented.

Apple and Beane (1995) posit that attention to the nature of curriculum (and pedagogy) directly recognizes the importance of the fundamental work of schools in pursuing social justice. Thus, as it is imperative to deconstructing oppressive forces and understanding the economic, political, and social dynamics and systems that manufacture and sustain social inequalities, social justice teacher leaders must present students with the historical contexts within which course concepts operate (Bercaw & Stooksberry, 2004; Hackman, 2005). This process is aided as teachers and students keep in mind that history is written by the “winners”, or those in power. Thus, teachers should encourage students to use multiple lenses in their framing of concepts. If students are to develop such skills in deconstruction, their analytic skills must be consistently challenged.
Through her research, Bartolome (2004) found teachers need to learn the social structures of society, the placement of individuals in society, and how existing injustices can be contested in order to competently employ critical pedagogy. More specifically, teachers and students must be able to connect macro-level problems to their own lives (Delpit, 1995; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1997; Nieto, 2000). Such understandings have the power to engage students in social action and encourage the incorporation of course content into their lives, communities, and larger society. Conversely, students must be able to make reverse linkages, understanding how course content relates to larger social issues from which they may otherwise feel detached. These processes foster student-centered classrooms, allow students to draw on personal experience, and support ownership of knowledge construction.

In the content mastery process, social justice teacher leaders should engage critical pedagogy, which prepares students to participate in a democratic society (Bartolome, 2004; Bercaw & Stooksberry, 2004). Though it lacks procedural guidelines of classroom implementation, critical pedagogy is vital to fostering ideals of social transformation among students. Still, teachers cannot confront the issue of equality through critical pedagogy if they fail to paint a clear image of the unequal political, economic, and cultural dynamics of schooling that reproduces dominant ideologies (Apple, 1989). Thus, teachers, themselves, must explore and develop critical conceptualizations of dominant ideologies (e.g., White dominance, deficit views, and meritocracy), if such classroom approaches are to be successful (Bartolome, 2004).
Bercaw and Stooksberry (2004) found three principles inherent to varying perspectives on critical pedagogy. First, teachers and students must engage in meaningful reflection upon their culture and lived experiences. Milner (2003) suggests use of race reflection where racial issues are addressed through dialogue and teachers and students attempt to understand one another while exposing their own hidden beliefs and experiences. Additionally, teachers and students must engage in dialogue with others to develop a voice reflecting their critical investigations of their own lives and society (Bercaw & Stooksberry, 2004). While meaningful dialogue is commonly avoided out of inexperience and apprehension, Shields (2003) argues must entail a “way of being” as it does and should provide insight into different lives experiences and worldviews. Finally, critical pedagogy requires the active participation in democratic processes in an effort to transform society for equality for all citizens. This form of teaching, in turn, encourages and empowers students as critical and motivated citizens (Giroux & McLaren, 1996).

**Critical thinking and analysis of oppression.** When students are provided information without historical context and opportunities to analyze, such reactions as hopelessness and cynicism may result (Hackman, 2005). Thus, social justice teacher leaders must require the critique of information if information is to be meaningful to students’ lives. In turn, social justice teacher leadership involves the development of classroom settings where all content is subject to debate and critique and critical thinking is a foundation for both teaching and learning processes.

Critical thinking for social justice also goes by the names of *critical consciousness* and political and ideological clarity. Critical consciousness, as discussed
above, involves the critique and subsequent transformation of unjust and oppressive social, political, and economic structures (Freire, 1970). Political and ideological clarity fosters teachers’ understanding if, why, and how their belief and value systems reflect and reproduce those of dominant society and oppress students (Bartolome, 2004). In developing such clarity, students, teachers, and their educators must be reminded that power never goes unchallenged, schools are not fixed environments, and teachers are well positioned to leverage their power in educational structures for the good of their students (Bartolome, 2004; Moll & Arnot-Hopffer, 2005).

“Critical thinking is the process by which we consider perspective, positionality, power, and possibilities with respect to content” (Hackman, 2005, p. 106). Teacher leaders who engage such critical thinking consistently place themselves and their students within power structures and use course content as a tool to create possibilities in students’ lives. Further, in behaving as critical thinkers, they must investigate alternatives to conventional, dominant views of reality.

Swartz (2003) suggests that a conventional schooling model is the source of coercive teaching practices and pedagogy that serves dominance. Such coercion involves transmission of knowledge to passive students who are to reproduce it upon request, rote learning, standardized performance expectations, and behavior adjustment through management, control and tracking. Furthermore, Freire (1985) emphasizes the oppressive nature of the Eurocentric orientation of conventional schooling with which White teachers often feel most secure. Such an orientation, which favors middle class European American social norms, marginalizes the cultural values and heritages of
students who are not a part of dominant cultures (Weisman & Garza, 2002). While some schools of education have made determined efforts to shift such oppressive paradigms, conventional educational practices still prevail as teachers are still viewed as bankers of knowledge and teaching to a standard student with whom White teachers are familiar is comfortable practice (Swartz, 2003).

Coercion is also seen in the struggle over power in the classroom under circumstances where teachers need to exercise autonomy (e.g., altering curriculum standards to meet some students’ unique academic needs), but must remain loyal to accountability systems, which inherently reduce or eliminate their power to make professional decisions independently (Reed, 2000; Webb, 2002). As teachers are dominated by political mandates, they are disempowered and overcome with obedience, conformity, passivity, and an unchallenged acceptance of authority (Kreisberg, 1992). Thus, their paradoxical position in “the web of institutional and ideological domination in schools” leaves teachers isolated and exceptionally powerless in the hierarchy of educational management (p. 9). This, in turn, affects their abilities to create meaningful learning opportunities for students and further fight oppressive forces in education.

To avoid the pitfalls of conventional schooling, teachers and students must use critical analysis and carefully consider issues of oppression to develop deep knowledge and methods of application for that knowledge in students’ lives (Hackman, 2005). By engaging in high-quality modeling of self-reflection, teacher educators help to foster critical thinking processes among their students and teachers’ abilities to develop critical pedagogy practices (Gay & Kirkland, 2003). Further, transformative learning processes
aid in the fight against oppressive school structures and the development of critical pedagogical practices and are imperative to the social justice teacher leader.

**Transformative learning.** It has been said that teachers knowing themselves, understanding their teaching contexts, and interrogating their knowledge and assumptions are equally as important as their mastery of methods (Gay & Kirkland, 2003). For those who agree with such a statement, transformative learning offers a frame in which teachers change how they see themselves and the world (Brown, 2005). Overall, transformative learning “involves the acquisition (or manipulation) of knowledge that disrupts prior learning and stimulates the reflective reshaping of deeply ingrained knowledge and belief structures” (Davis, 2006, p. 1). In acting as transformative intellectuals, rather than transmitters and recipients of knowledge, social justice teacher leaders and their students critically study the world and its unjust processes and then work to change it (Apple, 1989; Brown, 2004; Delpit, 1995, Ladson-Billings, 1995; Shields, 2004).

A central purpose of transformative learning is to change adults’ meaning structures, or the frames of reference they have developed as a result of their culture and contextual experiences (Mezirow, 1991). This is called perspective transformation. Social justice teacher leaders must rely on such transformation within themselves and others in an effort to change the status quo. Action through transformative learning is founded in critical self-reflection and discourse.

**Critical self-reflection.** Critical self-reflection is integral to developing an effective social justice teaching environment (hooks, 1994). Critical self-reflection attempts to explain how individuals’ expectations directly influence how experiences are
interpreted. Such reflective practice is said to be important from a cultural standpoint because as teachers understand themselves as cultural beings, they are more conscious and relative in their interactions with students, parents, and families and are encouraged to develop alliances with students, colleagues, and communities (Zeichner, 1996). In turn, critical self-reflection aids in the development of equitable schools. Still, critical self-reflection, which requires an active, critical analysis of the personal backgrounds, experiences, assumptions, and biases that inform practice as well as the social contexts within which that practice takes place, is often left out of the pedagogy of social justice (Giroux, 1992; Hackman, 2005).

Self-reflective teachers might interrogate their curriculum and pedagogy by asking such questions as: Where did I get this information? Why do I believe this information is important for my students to have? Is this factual information that I can cite or the blind reproduction of conventional knowledge? How might my students frame this information differently than I? How are my practices influencing my students individually? How might my students use these skills and information in their own lives?

Self-reflection is an imperative practice for preservice teachers and teachers who need to place themselves within large social contexts as well as teacher educators who want to encourage growth in their students (Parsons & Brown, 2001). The process reminds teachers of their power in their classrooms and creates opportunities for democratic classroom processes inherent to social justice education (Hackman, 2005, Kreisberg, 1992). Additionally, social justice teacher leaders are able to think critically about the nature of knowledge through self-reflection and should ask themselves what is
considered knowledge, how it is shaped, and it is transformed through relationships with individuals and their worlds (Giroux, 1992). Critical self-reflection also helps social justice teacher leaders maintain open minds and reminds them that alternative possibilities are always at hand (hooks, 1994).

Self-reflection is also important because it offers sites for action. In fact, Mezirow (1991) posited the very purpose of adult learning to be the realization of one’s agency through broadening awarenesses and critical reflection. Social justice teacher leaders, as practitioners of freedom, are characterized by their willingness to grow and change and, thus, are themselves act as sites of change (hooks, 1994). Hackman (2005) argues this is useful because it prevents feelings of lost hope and power that teachers and students alike often encounter when discussing macro-level social problems that involve oppression. Additionally, self-reflection disrupts complacency and natural biased tendencies as it serves as a checking system and moves teachers toward solutions.

**Critical discourse.** Another purpose of critical reflection is to externalize and investigate power relationships and expose oppressive systems (Brown, 2005). In addition to a critical approach to the self, social justice leaders ask themselves how equitable their democratic practices are and allow their processes to be critiqued by others (Jean-Marie, 2008). Transformative learning involves understanding the nature of reasoning through its methods, logic, and justification as well as the investigation into the source, structure, and history of a frame of reference (Mezirow, 2003).

Scholars argue that open and critical dialogue is core to critical pedagogy, which challenges Freire’s (1998) concept of banking in education and empowers students and
teachers alike with knowledge and skills to create change in their lives and communities (Bercaw & Stooksberry, 2004; Jean-Marie et al., 2009). In this pursuit, a weak form of dialogue that implies only methods of communication should be exchanged for dialogue that seeks to understand reasoning behind competing viewpoints (Mezirow, 1997; Shields, 2003). Mezirow (1997) argues that because we learn together by analyzing the related experiences of others, multiple interpretations of beliefs are necessary to achieve reliable interpretations or meaning. Here, the concept of communicative learning as a source of authentic understanding between teachers and students is invaluable (Mezirow, 2003). Through communicative learning, judgment is surpassed for meaningful understanding, which teachers must then use to create learning experiences that are meaningful to students’ lives. This approach to learning is useful in dialogue that seeks critical interpretations of experience for the betterment of self, others, and systems.

**Student-centered learning environments.** Scholars agree student-centered classrooms are fundamental to social justice education (Ayers, 1998; Gay, 2000; Nieto, 2000; Shor, 1986). If teachers wish to be leaders in social justice, mastering content, adopting critical thinking processes, becoming active change agents, and consistently practicing critical self-reflection, they must understand the group dynamics of their classrooms and their own socially constructed identities along with those of their students (Hackman, 2005). Hackman (2005) posits that such understanding goes as far as impacting the implementation efficacy of other tools for social justice education and if teachers “fail to consider group dynamics as they pertain to social identities and
multicultural perspectives, they miss the true potential of student-centered teaching and social justice education” (p. 108).

Considering group dynamics as they relate to culture and race means a social justice teacher leader is recognizing that students’ personal identities shape their backgrounds and experiences and, thus, their needs in a classroom setting. In a student-centered environment, such educators must go beyond recognition of student identities into integration and customization of content and method to meet the needs of the group (Hackman, 2005). Additionally, it is imperative for social justice teacher leaders to focus on creating safe learning environments for all students, develop standards that value diversity, and integrate culturally relevant and responsive practices, if they wish to adopt multicultural, student-centered orientations in their classrooms (Gay, 2000).

**Democratic classrooms.** In an effort to transform existing social norms toward a fully democratic society, where every voice is heard equally, an assumption that current norms actively silence voices outside of dominant culture must be adopted (Bercaw & Stooksberry, 2004; Nieto, 2006). Teacher education programs concerned with being responsive to the needs of students, systems, and society, should foster preservice teachers’ capacities for democratic leadership and their readiness for accountability systems, two forces often in conflict with each other (Mullen, 2008). Democratic schooling involves the honoring of voices – those of teachers, students, parents, and practitioners – as well as active decision making, valuing the creation and preservation of community, the pursuit of equality and support of diversity, and even the dismantling of oppressive systems of power (Larson & Ovando, 2001; Mullen, 2008).
The democratic school community, like social justice, is an ideal that is never fully realized (Furman & Shields, 2005). Instead, it can be understood as an ethical process, or way of life (Maxcy, 1995). Maxcy (1995) argues for a sort of “deep” democracy that Furman and Shields (2005) suggest promises hope in an increasingly diversifying society. Deep democracy involves an investment in the value and dignity of individuals and their expressions and participation, a respect for intelligence, investigation, and freedom, and a responsibility of individuals to explore and choose collaborative and common courses of action (Maxcy, 1995).

Further, the relationship between leadership and democracy and social justice, which are interdependent constructs, is complex and rich (see Furman & Shields, 2005). In summary, leadership that pursues democratic community and social justice in schools is committed to and has internalized moral purpose (Furman & Shields, 2005). Such leadership is both relationship-based and dialogic, as it fosters communicative learning (Mezirow, 2003; Shields, 2004). Finally, democratic and socially just school leadership focuses on the common good of community members and challenges policies, practices, and structures that create injustices and threaten community participation (Furman & Shields, 2005).

Mullen (2008) took on two often opposed, yet practical concepts that arise in educational leadership - democracy and accountability - in her study on how teacher leaders conceptualize the two separately as well as together, as one construct of democratic accountability. The author theorized democratically accountable leaders might skillfully marry the competing agendas of democracy and accountability to
develop school structures and model values that honor a balance of both. Findings suggest teacher leaders were mostly unable to link the two seemingly disparate concepts into one, functional leadership characteristic. Still, however, participants gave weight to democracy as being born of and recreated through community relations, central values, and shared decision making. Mullen (2008) maintains that democratic leaders “foster citizenship and community and further social justice goals, and these systems of accountability have the potential to influence and empower when social justice, self-regulation, and equity are core values” (p. 150).

**Empowerment and self-efficacy.** If dominant power structures in schools are to be challenged, *educational sovereignty* is necessary (Moll & Arnot-Hopffer, 2005; Moll & Ruiz, 2002). In determining the nature of education and the relationships among administrators, teachers, and students, a sovereign schooling structure must involve the deliberate work of qualified, committed, and conscientious social justice teacher leaders. Further, by challenging “the arbitrary authority of the dominant power structure to determine the essence of education”, an independent, separately operating system, motivated by such leaders, garners power by creating meaningful social networks (Moll & Arnot-Hopffer, 2005, p. 243; Moll & Ruiz, 2002). A sovereign educational system is imperative to social justice education as it enhances autonomy, mediates restrictive ideological and programmatic limitations, and provides alternative forms of schooling, accessible to all students.

Empowerment, described as the basis of educational philosophy, involves a critique of current systems of power in exchange for collaboration and participation as
well as the pursuit of equitable distributions of resources that enhance individuals’
capacities to reject domination through power and fully participate in democratic
processes (Ashcroft, 1987, Kreisberg, 1992). Such a critique extends into a “process
through which people and/or communities increase their control or master of their own
lives and the decisions that affect their lives” (Kreisberg, 1992, p. 19). Thus, as teachers
empower themselves they, in turn, reject relationships of control and inequality, which
are seen to be negative dimensions of empowerment, in exchange for the transcendence
of power, and develop positive ideals relating to self-worth, confidence, efficacy, and
autonomy.

Underpinning empowerment are psychological processes of individuals’ feelings
of self-worth, confidence, and efficacy (Bandura, 1977; Gibson & Dembo, 1984;
Kreisberg, 1992; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). Furthermore, empowerment entails
social processes involving the allocation and distribution of resources. Empowered
individuals gain control of their lives and fulfill their needs by doing such things as
developing skills and competencies necessary to effectively participate in their social and
political worlds. The concept has also been distinguished as a function of change, where
empowered individuals foster capacities to create change for themselves and others
instead of relying on hegemonic forces for help (Bandura, 1977; Rappaport, 1981).
Zeichner (1996) suggests effective teachers empower themselves as producers of
knowledge, using accurate, comprehensive and culturally reflective scholarship that is
appropriate considering the identities of their students.
Beliefs regarding one’s ability to influence forces they find important are most malleable in preservice years (Anderson et al., 1988; Bandura, 1977; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998; Woolfolk & Hoy, 1990). Additionally, due to the cyclical nature of self-efficacy, once those feelings have been established, researchers find they are seemingly resistant to change (Prothero, 2008; Ross, 1998; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998).

Tschannen-Moran et al. (1998) proposes in order to positively influence self-efficacy, teacher preparation programs must focus on offering more opportunities for dynamic classroom instruction and management coupled with meaningful feedback.

Feedback from practicum experiences should emphasize variables under the control of teaching interns and dismantle any prior feelings of performance incapability (Anderson et al., 1988; Bandura, 1977; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998; Woolfolk & Hoy, 1990). Furthermore, if programs are concerned with social justice, students’ experiences should provide equipment for a social justice toolbox and feedback dialogue should include critical discussions about such factors as teacher and students’ race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and other personal identity factors. Finally, self-efficacy beliefs regarding social justice practices and outcomes during preservice years may be most telling of the level and consistency of effort such teachers will employ in utilizing tools of social justice as well as their potential to become social justice teacher leaders.

**Taking Action.** Social justice teacher leadership is primarily concerned with action. As agents of change who are aware of oppressive systems in schools and society and teach against the grain in the interest of their students, social justice teacher leaders
actively resist, rebel against, and reconstruct existing structures (Brooks et al., 2007; Cochran-Smith, 1991; Furman, 2012; Goldfarb & Grinberg, 2002; Jansen, 2006).

Through critical thinking and transformative learning processes, these teacher leaders gain empowerment and create student-centered classrooms and orientations in critical pedagogy to create opportunities for all of their students and, ultimately, a more equal society.

If social justice teacher leadership supports critical ideologies and the exposure of oppressive forces, it must also focus on the creation of classroom environments that are founded in the idea that social action is fundamental to everyday life and teach tools for change. In doing so, teachers and students must work together transform the hopelessness and cynicism that result from learning about issues of oppression and privilege into those of transcendence and possibility (Hackman, 2005). Teachers must disrupt conventional ideas that silence as acts of loyalty and patriotism and understand their rights as citizens are coupled with responsibilities of participation, voice, and even protest.

Bartolome (2004) found such disruption is often achieved through the subversion of existing hegemonic systems that create and reproduce injustices. Her research suggests negative emotions, such as anger and resentment, may motivate teachers to question social structures and to take action in the name of their students even if such action is prohibited in accepted norms and rules. For example, a social justice teacher leader might view a disciplinary procedure dictated by school authorities to be unjust and, when confronted with an issue that would require their compliance, they break the rule in
the best interest of their students. Furthermore, a teacher leader might find and create opportunities to voice their discontent, rally allies, and change such oppressive policies and structures.

Hackman (2005) argues tools for social change throughout our history are as diverse as the political perspectives of those involved. Still, she identifies a number of methods that reflect unique approaches to change, including Lorde’s (1984) principle that people cannot dismantle the master’s house using the master’s tools and Christenson’s (1998) approach to social change through writing and literature. Hackman also cites Freire’s (1973) process of “problem posing” to achieve awareness and practice freedom through education as a tool for social transformation and Alinsky’s (1971) method of grassroots activism and street protests to redistribute economic and political power to the masses. A social justice teacher leader may adopt any approach in its entirety, components of several, or develop one that reflects the needs and resources of their students, schools, and communities.

The commitments of teachers who are successful at influencing the lives and experiences of their students are more resolved than any obstacle they might encounter (Barth, 2006). These teacher leaders possess a unique commitment and persistence in pursing change, which is credited to an exceptional care they possess for students. Inherent to the profile of a social justice teacher leader is an acceptance of personal challenge. The trials these extraordinary educators pursue are not required by authority and on rare occasion supported by the structures and processes in place in their schools, community, and society. Yet, these leaders remain active in seeking transformative
learning experiences that bolster their fight against forces that inhibit the opportunities promised by education. They internalize Freire’s (1970) contention that while “education is not the ultimate lever for social transformation”, without it transformation is impossible (p. 37). The social justice teacher leader uses the classroom as a site of reformation and empowerment, where students enter with their unique life triumphs and challenges and leave with the knowledge, skills, determination, and hope essential to changing their worlds for the better.

The social justice teacher leadership conceptual framework serves two purposes. First, it bridges gaps between overlapping areas of inquiry that formerly lacked a conceptual foundation. Literature from the disparate areas of social justice teacher education, teacher leadership for social justice, and social justice leadership were reviewed for theoretical consistencies and many were found. Furthermore, empirical research in the areas consistently fall short of addressing this opportunity as investigators seem apprehensive in developing progressive conceptualizations that include preservice teachers in conversations on social justice leadership. Ultimately, scholarship’s failure to view preservice teachers as leaders explains the research chasm that exists regarding these teachers’ capacities for such social justice leadership work. As a result of this theoretical finding, the social justice teacher leadership framework was born.

Additionally, the social justice teacher leadership framework has practical significance in this empirical project. If preservice teachers’ conceptualizations and beliefs are effective predictors of the orientations and behaviors they engage in service (see Bandura, 1977; Prothero, 2008; Ross, 1998; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998; 106
Tuchman & Isaacs, 2011), then an investigation into these early teachers’ perspectives on leadership and social justice is valuable to all related fields of inquiry. The current study activates this idea and uses the social justice teacher leadership framework and its six themes outlined above to fully understand the potentials of a set of teachers in training. In a discussion of research findings, the framework will be revisited as its tenets were applied to research data to extract findings regarding study participants’ perceptions. Through this process, social justice teacher leadership is informed through empirical evidence and a more sound theory is constructed.

Summary

The purpose of this literature review was to provide a context for the current study, which intends to investigate how future teachers conceptualize social justice teacher leadership. First, I addressed the role of social justice in schooling to provide the reader with a basic understanding of the integral role education plays in the purveying of opportunity in our society. Following, a discussion on preparing preservice teachers for social justice work was offered to frame the educational experiences of the population in study. I then offered a review of literature on teacher leadership that moved into a discussion of leadership for social justice. Before connecting the two, the lack of research in the area of preservice teacher conceptualizations of social justice teacher leadership was addressed and a framework for understanding social justice teacher leadership was outlined for use in the study. In Chapter Three, I will discuss the research and design methodology used in this study.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to investigate how a set of preservice teachers conceptualize social justice teacher leadership. While literature on social justice and teacher leadership exists, few studies have broached how these two concepts are conceptualized together and understood by preservice teachers. As discussed in Chapter Two, preservice teacher self-efficacy to perform tasks related to social justice teacher leadership is instrumental in the process-oriented, highly contextual type of leadership.

This chapter discusses the research design for this study and how empirical data was used to answer the research questions and draw conclusions from the study (Yin, 2008). First, I present the research questions. Next, I discuss why qualitative case study methodology is the most appropriate approach for this particular research study. Following, I outline the ethical issues of validity and reliability and, then, describe data collection methods. Finally, I present my data analysis techniques, followed by the limitations and significance of the study.

Research Question

Research questions for this study were designed to most accurately address the study’s purpose and consider the context within which the study’s subjects operate. Social justice leadership’s theoretical and contextual nature (Bogotch, 2002; Brooks et al., 2007; Furman, 2012; Marshall et al., 2010) coupled with preservice teachers’ general lack of practical teaching experience make apparent the difficulty study participants’ may experience in grasping the concept of social justice as it pertains to teachers and leadership. Additionally, because the concept of social justice is inherent to the
development of teachers who behave as agents of change (i.e., teacher leaders) (Brown, 2004; Cochran-Smith et al., 2009; Gewirtz & Cribb, 2002; Milner, 2009; Nieto, 2000), I was primarily concerned with participants’ conceptualizations of the leadership approach. The research questions that guided this study was: How do leaders identified among undergraduate preservice teachers conceptualize social justice teacher leadership?

Unit of Analysis

There exists some debate among scholars of qualitative case study methodology over identifying the unit of analysis that determines the nature of the study. According to Merriam (2009), “Part of the confusion surrounding case studies is that the process of conducting a case study is conflated with both the unit of study (the case) and the product of this type of investigation” (p. 40). Yin (2008) sees case study as a research process of a phenomenon whose bounds with its context are unclear, whereas Wolcott (1992) suggests a case study is identifiable by the end product of fieldwork. According to Stake (2005), case study research is less of a methodological choice than a “choice of what is to be studied” (p. 443). Merriam (2009) agrees, calling the “what” of a case the unit of analysis.

In the dimensions of purposeful selection described above, Miles and Huberman (1994) side with Stake (2005) and Merriam (2009) and identify a study’s unit of analysis as the actors being observed or interviewed. Within a bounded system, the unit of analysis may be a single person, group, institution, community, or policy and characterizes a case study (Merriam, 2009). Miles and Huberman (1994) illustrate this understanding with the bounded system of the study represented by a circle and the
study’s unit of analysis as a heart that resides in the center. Before one can understand the unit of analysis, an understanding of its context must be obtained.

The University of Missouri’s (MU) Teacher Development Program (TDP) serves as the context for this study. This bounded system was determined because of its relationship to the study’s unit of analysis, or participants. The units analyzed in this study are undergraduate preservice teacher leaders enrolled in the MU TDP. These participants’ educational experiences as they relate to their development as future teachers are largely constructed within the MU TDP context, which warrants an understanding of the teacher education program. Further, my intrinsic interest in the research subjects themselves, instead of something larger, points to these preservice teachers as the study’s unit of analysis.

**Qualitative Methodology**

Qualitative research has been defined as an umbrella concept that employs several methods of inquiry that help illustrate the meaning of social phenomena in a specific context (Merriam, 2009). Furthermore, this methodology focuses on how actual people make meaning of their world and the experiences they have in it by developing descriptions of events, issues, people, places, and conversations (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Hatch, 2002; Merriam, 2009; Stake, 1995). Denzin and Lincoln (2005) suggest researchers who employ this approach “study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (p. 3). Furthermore, qualitative researchers engage in consistent interpretation throughout the collection process to develop complex meanings, which cannot be
accomplished by alternative design or in retrospect (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Stake, 1995).

The nature of this study’s research questions point directly to the use of qualitative methodology as they inquire how preservice teachers interpret their knowledge and experiences into a conceptualization of social justice teacher leadership, feelings regarding personal abilities to act as future change agents, and help to develop an understanding what can be done to foster social justice teacher leadership among this population. Methods scholars agree, research questions that inquire what and how convey an open, emergent design that is distinctive of qualitative works (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Creswell, 2009; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2008).

Characteristics of qualitative research include investigations in a natural setting with an emergent design (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009; Stake, 1995). The qualitative researcher utilizes an interpretive lens as the key instrument of data collection. Also unique to the role of this researcher is a focus on participants’ meaning-making and the development of a complex, holistic understanding of the phenomenon in question. Additionally, use of a theoretical lens and an inductive data analysis process that may build concepts, theories, or hypotheses are common and was a characteristic of this study, which used the social justice teacher leadership framework to organize findings. Merriam (2009) adds qualitative research is characterized by a richly descriptive end product that may include such data as quotations and field notes. Though it was once a common characteristic, fieldwork has been identified as more accurately descriptive of a method of inquiry under the umbrella of qualitative research (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007;
Merriam, 1998, 2009). As the research questions of this study demand a qualitative design, its methodological frame reflects all of the above characteristics.

**Collective Case Study**

Empirical research on the practice of social justice leadership at any organizational level is emerging, with most research taking the form of case study (Marshall et al., 2010). Additionally, case study research on social justice leadership employs variant purposes, methods, conceptual frames, and extracts different understandings of social justice leadership in findings (Furman, 2012). Because this type of leadership lacks objective models, is continuously critiqued and reconstructed to fit shifting needs, and difficult to grasp (Bogotch, 2002; Brooks et al., 2007), a method of inquiry that involves in-depth description and requires a bounded context within which the concept can be explored is necessary (Merriam, 2009).

Utilizing a collective qualitative case study approach allows the exploration of the social justice teacher leadership phenomena in the bounded context of one teacher development program at an institution of higher education. Case study is appropriate to answer the research questions as its particularistic nature allows for the exposure of important information about the phenomena of social justice teacher leadership as it pertains to preservice teachers and teacher preparation programs (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 1995). This methodology also provides a design that is descriptive and results that offer thick description of the phenomena. Further, case studies are described as heuristic, which allows for new meaning to evolve what is already known about social justice teacher leadership. The case study approach is also appropriate for this study as I am less
concerned with hypotheses testing and creating generalizations than discovery, insight, interpretation, and particularization (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 1995).

Collective case studies aggregate a number of bounded systems to investigate something larger than a particular case (Stake, 1995). This type of case study involves the collection and analysis of data from several cases and is distinguished from single case study design, which may have subcases embedded within the case (Merriam, 2009). The collective case study design of this study allowed for the aggregation of data across five cases to address its research question regarding social justice teacher leadership. Stake (1995) separates collective case study from those that are solely intrinsic or instrumental in purpose and suggests collective case studies are more instrumental, as they are concerned with phenomena relative to individual cases, and concerned with representation, as each case is selected to be representative of others. However, Stake warns, cases are not studied to understand other cases and the researchers’ obligations lies first in understanding each individual case. In a collective case study, each single case is of interest because they belong to a collection of cases and are categorically bound together as they share a common condition. Following these design parameters, the following chapter will begin with meaningful investigations into the five individual cases used in this study before a framework is utilized to draw out cross-case themes.

Merriam (2009) asserts compelling interpretation in collective case studies correlates with increased number of cases and variation across cases included in a study. Miles and Huberman (1994) add by analyzing multiple cases, researchers are better equipped to understand each case and how, where, and even why it behaves as it does.
Ultimately, five cases were used in this study. Despite interest and effort, time became the primary factor in including additional cases in the study. The case selection process is discussed in depth below. Because collective case studies can be difficult to manage, Bogdan and Biklen (2007) suggest gathering data from one case at a time. This approach will lessen confusion for the researcher and allow the first case to define parameters of the others, making subsequent cases easier to manage. Data for each of the five cases used in this study were gathered in phases, by participant. This means the first of two interviews were conducted with each participant before second interviews were scheduled and completed. This method proved effective in managing ten interviews before transcription and cross-case analysis was performed on the data.

**Site and Participant Selection**

Prior to the data collection process, boundaries for a study must be established. Creswell (2009) states, “The idea behind qualitative research is to purposefully select participants or sites that will best help the researcher understand the problem and the research question” (p. 178). Purposeful sampling allows the researcher to intentionally select a sample from which the most information can be gleaned as they attempt to investigate the phenomenon in question (Merriam, 2009). Miles and Huberman (1994) outline four dimensions to consider when conducting purposeful selection. First, the researcher must identify the setting, or where the research will be conducted. Then, it is important to identify the actors, or units to be analyzed. The events regarding the actors that will be observed or interviewed follows and, finally, the process or evolution of events undertaken by actors within the setting is decided upon. In selecting these four
research dimensions, investigators employ the most appropriate form of purposeful sampling, given their research topic.

For this study, I utilized convenience and variation sampling in selecting the study’s site and cases, or individual participants. Additionally, the events and process of the study were considered in their purposeful sample selection. Because the unit of analysis cannot be separated from its context, the site and its selection will first be discussed, followed by a description of participants and the processes used in their selection.

Site Selection

MU Teacher Development Program. The University of Missouri (MU) Teacher Development Program (TDP) is housed at the state’s flagship institution of public higher education – the University of Missouri. In the 2011-2012 school year, the program granted 272 bachelor’s degrees in education (L. Wilcox, personal communication, June 20, 2013). Housed in MU’s College of Education, the program is ranked 58th overall among the nation’s Education Schools that offer doctoral degrees (U.S. News and World Report, 2012). Additionally, the college within which TDP resides is associated with the MU Partnership for Educational Renewal, the largest school partnership in the nation, with 330 schools in 22 districts in the State (“MU College of Education,” 2013). The college is also consistently ranked among the nation’s top colleges of education. School and community partnerships are paramount to the education students receive through the MU TDP and are achieved through ongoing field experiences throughout the teacher preparation program. All students complete a
minimum of 56 community service hours, both in schools and with public service agencies.

MU TDP consists of four phases, with each phase building upon the previous (“MU College of Education,” 2013). In Phase I of the program, students develop fundamental concepts regarding learning and teaching. Students in this phase have yet to be officially accepted into the MU TDP program and are not counted among teacher education majors. In Phase II, students who have been accepted into their respective certification programs undergo intensive training in curriculum and pedagogy. Students in Phase III of the program are placed with host teachers for 16 weeks of classroom teaching experience. Students who successfully complete all requirements of Phase II and III are eligible for graduation from MU TDP. Finally, Phase IV offers ongoing support to the MU TDP graduates who are in their first year of professional teaching.

MU TDP partners with approximately 80 schools in 22 urban, suburban, and rural districts across the State and maintains focus on research and practitioner experience. Additionally, it is the largest active program of The Comprehensive Teacher Induction Consortium, a group of like teacher induction programs (Gilles, Davis, & McGlamery, 2009). A focus of the consortium is to share ideas and research opportunities among member programs that offer a full year of mentored support for first-year teachers by experienced teachers, master’s degree coursework that allows for completion within 15 months, a cohort group of beginning teachers, and action research projects that form the capstone of the program. Of the active consortium programs, research shows the MU TDP’s participants remain in the teaching profession longer than others. While teacher
 retention rates are bleak, especially in the first five years, over 91 percent of the MU TDP participants stayed in education up to eight years after graduating from the MU TDP and entering Phase IV of the program (Gilles et al., 2009).

**Sampling.** Sampling involves the selection of a study’s site and its participants. In case studies, sample selection must first occur at the site level and consider criteria established by the study and the researcher (Merriam, 2009). The selection of a qualitative research site must be purposeful because the nature of such work relies on information-richness. Additionally, purposeful sampling is necessary when the research participants share some common characteristic.

Beyond the consideration of access, I was motivated to investigate a site that has a significant impact in the development and dissemination of teachers across the state by the grassroots nature of social justice teacher leadership. MU TDP is housed in the flagship institution of higher education in Missouri and graduates an average of 275 undergraduate students each year (J. White, personal communication, June 10, 2013). The vast majority of MU TDP students obtain teaching certifications and establish careers in a variety of social, political, and economic contexts across the state. Thus, the MU TDP is a site that impacts the nature of teaching in Missouri. Furthermore, as literature suggests teachers’ feelings of self-efficacy and attitudes toward social justice are most malleable in preservice years (Bandura, 1977; Anderson et al., 1988; Woolfolk & Hoy, 1990; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998), understanding this program will help illustrate the capacities of the teachers it places in Missouri schools.
Additionally, I am concerned with the nature of education along with student perspectives within this particular teacher preparation program, which theoretically sets a standard for employers and other preparation programs across Missouri. MU TDP’s values have a far reach because of the reputation the program holds as part of the state’s flagship institution, which attracts top performing students across the state and high quality faculty. Diversity in student identity and experience is also a factor. As social justice is concerned with such issues, I am interested in a site that that draws students from diverse backgrounds and places them in a variety of teaching contexts, post-graduation. Further, while the program has a majority White enrollment, MU, its home and the largest public institution in the state, offers a rich mix of students of different races, ethnicities, socioeconomic statuses, etc. This campus diversity, to which the MU TDP students have considerable exposure, has the capacity to influence student perceptions and experiences. These considerations reflect the responsibilities the MU TDP holds in preparing its students for social justice teacher leadership.

Convenience sampling was employed in the site selection for this study. Having served as a course instructor under the MU TDP for three years, I am familiar with program heads, design, and culture, making the site accessible and providing ease in research planning. While the site provides a convenient context for the study, I am also aware of the threats convenience selection may pose to this research. Merriam (2009) posits credibility and information-richness may be lost with convenience samples and warns against selection based on factors of time, money, location, or availability alone. However, I also recognize that “some dimension of convenience almost always figures
into sample selections” (Merriam, 2009, p. 79). Moreover, Bogdan and Biklen (2007) argue novice researchers should consider convenience in selecting a study’s setting, citing the difficulty of “getting in” and negotiating with gatekeepers (p. 58).

Convenience sampling was anticipated not to threaten the quality of data obtained in the study. While four of the five participants selected for the study were former students of mine, I was cognizant of the credibility concerns regarding data collected. Thus, I intentionally and consistently utilized methods to mitigate the effects of bias throughout data collection, including addressing same and related topics in various ways to ensure data validity. Additionally, the team-teaching style of the course in which students were enrolled under me suggests that my direct impact on individual students was minimal. Discussions with students also suggested that past student-instructor relationships were insignificant in their motivations to participate and/or in their responses to questions. For example, participants rarely, if ever, mentioned the course or associated relationships and when they did it was done so without significance. Thus, the justification of convenience in selecting MU TDP as the site for the study is sound.

Participants

Merriam (2009) asserts selection criteria must first be established when selecting a sample for case study. For collective case studies, each case is selected based on relevant criteria. The criteria used in this study’s case selection was students who were identified as leaders among their peers in a teacher education program and variation among those students’ certification programs. Because “any common patterns that emerge from great variation are of particular interest and value in capturing the core
experiences and central, shared dimensions of a setting or phenomenon,” variation
sampling was employed in considering cases for this study (Patton, 2002, p. 234). This
variation sampling method allowed themes to naturally emerge from the data that
illustrated consistent factors which may contribute to or hinder the development of social
justice teacher leadership dispositions among student leaders.

To begin the sampling process, I obtained a list of all teaching certification
program director names and contact information from one of the directors. The programs
represented in the sample were: (a) Early Childhood, (b) Elementary, (c) Middle School
Math, (d) Secondary School Math, (e) Middle School English, (f) Secondary School
English, (g) Science, (h) Social Studies, (i) Music, (j) Art, and (k) Special Education. All
11 certification program directors were emailed with a synopsis of the research study and
asked to respond with nominations of students who stood out as leaders in their academic
program. Seven directors responded with a range of one to six leader nominations each,
which gave me a total of 25 student leader nominations.

Due to Institutional Review Board (IRB) limitations, directors could not be asked
details regarding the nature of their nominees’ leadership. According to IRB regulations,
clearance must first be obtained before data collection can occur and such information,
obtained before clearance, could be used as viable data in the study. Because of this
restriction I was unable to ascertain the nature of participants’ leadership prior to their
recruitment, but did ask participants to speculate why they may have been nominated for
this study as well as details regarding their leadership experiences and qualities.
Nonetheless, the types of leaders recruited for the study reflected directors’ definitions of student leadership instead of my own.

During this research project’s initial planning stages, it was decided that one student from each of the above listed program areas would be selected, without regard to grade level of teaching. Thus, nine students was the recruitment goal. Plans included the recruitment of an English Education major, for example, of either grade level because, theoretically, students with an interest in English Education possess similar orientations to the subject of this study, when compared to students with interests in other areas. I maintained this initial recruitment goal and randomly selected and contacted nine of the 25 student leader nominees, considering variation in certification area. These students represented each of the Elementary, English, Math, Social Studies, Art, Science, and Special Education programs of which directors responded to the call for nominations. Three of those nine did not respond to the invitation to participate and six students were recruited for the study.

These six recruited participants received an email outlining the study’s purpose, participant expectations, risks and benefits of participation, confidentiality and privacy concerns, and researcher contact information. As students began responding with interest to participate, I immediately began to schedule first interviews and data collection was underway. During data collection, I continued my recruitment effort with an objective to obtain nine participants, but denials to participate and non-responses limited my ability to find three additional participants. I used pseudonyms throughout analysis and reporting to protect participants’ privacy and confidentiality. Of the six recruited students, one
dropped out of the study after the first interview and, ultimately, five participants were included in the study. Participants represented Math, Art, Social Studies, English, and Special Education programs.

Data Collection Methods

Hatch (2002) says, “Qualitative data are objects, pictures, or detailed descriptions that cannot be reduced to numbers without distorting the essence of the social meanings they represent” (p. 9). Essential to the data collection plan are a definition of the case, list of research questions, identification of any helpers, sources of data, necessary financial support, time allocation, and knowledge of intended reporting methods (Stake, 1995). While in the field, recognition of good data requires experience, sensitivity, skepticism, and preparation. Additionally, in the data gathering process, rich descriptions of context should be documented. To understand the perspectives and experiences of participants as they pertain to the research questions, data for this study was gathered from interviews with preservice teacher leaders enrolled in MU TDP. This method enabled me to capture preservice teachers’ perspectives and experiences related to concepts and issues of social justice teacher leadership.

Interviews

Interviews serve as a viable method to understand how individuals behave, feel, and interpret their worlds, experiences that cannot be observed by a second party (Merriam, 2009, p. 88). Stake (1995) suggests it is qualitative researchers’ concern with discovering and portraying multiple perspectives of any given case that points to interviews as the primary source of valuable data. My research object to expose
participant conceptualizations of social justice teacher leadership justifies the use of interviewing as my method of data collection. Further, participants themselves are most equipped to express these multiple realities, which I cannot ascertain as an observer. Two person-to-person, semi-structured interview inspired by the study’s research questions were conducted with each of five participants. Participants were provided with information on the study’s purpose, type of data sought, possible variations in the study, as well as formal record of their volunteer status and informed consent (Yin, 2008).

Semi-structured interview design was employed as it provides the opportunity to obtain comparable data across participants that can later be analyzed for themes (Creswell, 2009; Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Use of such an interview design includes flexible questions that guide the interview, but have no predetermined order or wording (Merriam, 2009). An interview protocol was designed to guide me through each interview (see Appendices) (Creswell, 2009). Protocol questions addressed participant background and experiences and included perspectives on social justice, leadership, and concepts of future teaching. This protocol endured three iterations as discussions with outside researchers experienced with interviewing and a pilot study involving two participants warranted changes to its initial designs. A pilot study was performed with an intention to provide myself with practice as a researcher and test the interview protocol, paying attention to the quality of questions and overall length of interviews. Results from the pilot study suggested initial protocols allowed both interviews to significantly exceed preferred duration by approximately 30 to 45 minutes. Further, there was a need to
maintain focus on topics that directly informed the study. As a result of these pilot study findings, the protocol was edited accordingly.

During interview processes, I attempted to maintain a neutral stance and refrain from influencing participants’ responses, especially as they pertained to characterizations of social justice teacher leadership and experiences within their teacher preparation program (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2008). I heeded Yin’s (2009) advice and focused on (1) asking quality questions, (2) performing descriptive interpretations, (3) exercising listening skills that facilitated the assimilation of large amounts of information, (4) remaining flexible and adaptive throughout the process, and (5) accessing my own knowledge of the issues under investigation. Effort in these areas required concentration and mental preparation prior to interviews and I found past experiences with interviewing to be helpful in conducting these interviews that resulted in large amounts of rich data.

Semi-structured interview design requires the researcher to use probes, or questions that asked participants to further elaborate their thoughts and deconstruct concepts that have subjective interpretations. Each interview lasted approximately 90 minutes and was audio recorded on two separate devices, a voice recorder and a smart phone, to avoid loss of data due to technical malfunction. Additionally, I took notes on key thoughts that may have warranted further interpretation and as a means to maintain a log of themes that surfaced in each dialogue. Following interviews, I transcribed data and notes in electronic format as soon as possible for use in the analysis process.

Interview questions were developed during the literature review writing phase, as themes pertinent to the research questions repeatedly emerged in a review of relevant
research. Merriam (2009) characterizes good questions as those that are open-ended and obtain rich descriptive data about the phenomenon. I also attempted to understand participants’ experiences through interview questions that ask about activities, events, and conversations they have experienced in their teacher education classes. Furthermore, their perspectives and values as they pertain to social justice teacher leadership and their experiences in their teacher preparation program were solicited. Finally, as the study is concerned with participants’ understanding of social justice teacher leadership, knowledge questions were included in the interview protocol.

Hypothetical and ideal position questions were utilized in this study (Strauss, Schatzman, Bucher & Sabshin, 1981). The theoretical, highly contextual, and sometimes sensitive nature of social justice teacher leadership coupled with participants’ lack of experience as classroom teachers necessitated I use these types of questions to elicit thought processes that might push participants to think critically and beyond the bounds of their personal experiences. Furthermore, Merriam (2009) asserts such interview questions are particularly useful in difficult interviewing scenarios where participants may be reluctant to speak. Hypothetical interview questions asked interviewees how they might react in a given situation, whereas ideal position questions asked them to illustrate an ideal profile given a prompt (Strauss et al., 1981).

Ensuring Validity and Reliability

Ensuring validity and reliability in qualitative work implies employing ethics in the research process (Merriam, 2009). Lincoln and Guba (2000) suggest the applied nature of most social science research requires that findings be “sufficiently authentic” so
that law and policy might be designed from their parameters. Careful attention to the
design of a study along with the collection, analysis, interpretation, and presentation of
data can ensure both the reliability and validity of its findings (Merriam, 2009).Outlined
below are the measures I took to ensure the research process was ethical.

**Validity.** Validity in qualitative research ensures the accuracy of findings and is a
term often used interchangeably with trustworthiness, credibility, and authenticity
(Creswell, 2009). Stake (1995) suggests in an effort to find accurate, alternative
explanations regarding any phenomena, discipline is necessary in data collection and
such discipline is achieved through the triangulation of data, or a test to see if the
“phenomenon or case remains the same at other times, in other spaces, or as persons
interact differently” (p. 112). Four methods of triangulation include the use of multiple
theories, multiple investigators, multiple sources of data, and multiple methods of
investigation (Denzin, 1984). Creswell (2009) recognizes triangulation as the primary
means of ensuring validity, but goes on to recommend the employment of any of seven
other strategies.

While a popular method, researchers are not bound to data triangulation in their
search for validity. Yin (1994) points out that generalizations in case studies are made to
theories, not populations, and the inclusion of multiple cases strengthens researchers’
abilities to pattern-match and, therefore, increase validity in the robustness of theories.
Miles and Huberman (1994) agree and assert that use of multiple cases strengthens the
precision, validity, and stability of research findings. Additionally, the inclusion of
multiple cases is common practice in the search for external validity and generalizability (Merriam, 2009).

In exchange for data triangulation, I used multiple cases in this study to build a valid conceptualization of social justice teacher leadership and understand how cases conceived their future work as agents of change. My concern with cases’ ideas and expressions was based in theory instead of observable factors (e.g., language, actions) that might motivate others to make generalizations to the preservice teacher leader population based on my research findings. Again, as scholars suggest, the inclusion of multiple cases ensures the accuracy of my research findings (Merriam, 2009; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Yin, 1994).

Beyond triangulation, member checking of findings through study participants, use of rich, thick description to convey findings, and delimitation of researcher positionality are sequentially the most frequently used and easy to implement in a search for research validity (Creswell, 2009; Merriam, 2009; Stake, 1995). Presentation of negative or discrepant information, expenditure of prolonged time in the field, use of peer debriefs and external audits regarding the study are also procedures that may enhance qualitative validity. Yin (2008) adopts a post-positivist perspective in the development of validity, suggesting that methods to ensure validity should establish causal relationships and generalizable findings in addition to correcting operational measures. However, these were not aims of the current research study.

As mentioned, the primary mode of ensuring validity in my research was through its multiple, or collective, case design. Additionally, however, I conducted member
checks by asking participants to review transcripts and identify any misquotes and provide elaborations where needed. This process was done by email and I received full confirmation of the accuracy of my data and no requests for changes, which helped to strengthen the validity of my findings. I also used detailed description in presenting findings and expressed my biases to both myself and the study’s audience through an open, honest, and ongoing self-reflection. This reflection involved a delineation of known biased perspectives prior to data collection as well as taking notes regarding my personal reactions during the interview process and engaging in dialogue with others, unrelated to the study, about my experiences and feelings regarding the cases and findings following interviews. The acknowledgement of my reactions to the data and biases as a researcher allowed me to identify how I might influence the research process and, subsequently, monitor and adjust my interactions with participants and the data in an effort to minimize direct influence. Finally, I utilized a method throughout the interview process that revisits themes through interview questions to check for the authenticity of participant responses. For example, I asked each participant about the role teachers should adopt in addressing social justice in their schools in both interviews, using varied language and responses that matched could be determined as authentic.

**Reliability.** Reliability in qualitative research suggests the researcher’s approach to data collection and analysis is consistent across researchers and projects, or, said otherwise, the degree to which findings can be replicated (Creswell, 2009; Merriam, 2009; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2008). Lincoln and Guba (1985) term this *dependability* or *consistency*. Because replication of a qualitative study will yield various findings due to
the range of possible interpretations existent for the same data, the focus of reliability lies in the consistency of the results with the data collected (Merriam, 2009).

In ensuring consistency in case study research, Yin (2003) suggests detailed and ongoing documentation of procedures and the development of detailed protocols and databases. Other procedures include review of transcripts and codes for mistakes and inconsistencies (Gibbs, 2007) and cross-checking code assignments with another coder (Creswell, 2009). As a standard, good reliability in qualitative research should express 80 percent consistency in cross-checked codes (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

In participant communications I used standard forms and all participants were exposed to the same two interview protocols. Throughout data collection, I maintained detailed notes of data to corroborate transcript data. As I engaged in analysis, I had audio recordings available for reference, should ambiguity have become an issue. Further, I cross-checked my code assignments using a volunteer coder during the analysis processes. I did this by randomly selecting data pieces and asking the volunteer to assign them to established categories and determine their own codes. In the rare occasion of discord, we discussed the possibilities in the data and I decided on assignments, recognizing the subjectivity that is inherent to qualitative research. As a side note, I found this cross-checking process enjoyable as it provided the opportunity to talk about research data that excited me with a second party.

**Data Analysis**

The purpose of analysis is to make sense out of collected data and involves generating deeper understanding of data as it is systematically evaluated (Bogdan &
This process involves working with data, organizing it into manageable units, coding and synthesizing it, and searching for themes. Some analysis must take place during the data collection process, as researchers actively handle and think about the data and the progress of the study in this phase. Analysis in the collection phase maintains the study’s focus and makes the data manageable. Stake (1995) suggests “often, the patterns will be known in advance, drawn from the research questions, serving as a template for analysis” (p. 78). However, after initial analysis is done and all data relevant to the study has been collected, researchers must develop a system for deep analysis and, sometimes, unexpected patterns will emerge.

Data analysis in collective case study design occurs in two stages (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2008). Within-case analysis involves the treatment of each individual case as a comprehensive case where the researcher endeavors to learn as much about the case and its context as possible. During the interview process, participants were asked about personal backgrounds and experiences in addition to topics relating to the research questions. Data was then organized to develop individual case profiles. While each participant was interviewed using the same protocol, findings illustrate their distinctiveness not only in background and experiences, but regarding how their perspectives are unique and founded in individually defined philosophies. Once within-case analyses are complete, cross-case analysis begins, where the researcher attempts to derive generalizations across cases. Cross-case findings included data from individual cases and centered on themes established by the social justice teacher leadership framework. Data was used to inform the framework as participants expressed their
notions of their future work as teachers and agents of change. Aside from the two tiered
approach to analysis, cross-case analysis differs very little from the analysis process used
in single case studies (Merriam, 2009).

Stake (1995) posits there are two strategies of data analysis through which
meaning is derived. Direct interpretation involves the attachment of meaning to a single
incident, while categorical aggregation involves analysis of a collection of incidences.
Both methods of analysis are used to gather meaning and discover patterns from data in
case studies. Meaning is found through coding, where researchers organize data into
categories before making sense of them (Creswell, 2009). Bogdan and Biklen (2007)
remind us that any unit of data may be coded a variety of ways; that is, analysis is
subjective and the same piece of data can be given several meanings.

The real process of coding begins with a search for repeated words, phrases,
events, patterns of thought or behavior in the data (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Creswell,
2009; Wolcott, 1990). A proxy term or phrase is assigned to each to develop a coding
category (under a coding family), which is then used to sort descriptive data (Bogdan &
Biklen, 2007). Modification of codes is a necessary process as the researcher discovers
the most appropriate codes for the data. Testing codes and limiting their number is
imperative to analysis until codes become fixed, at which they should be put into list
form with assigned numbers.

Coding categories can emerge from the data, as just described, or they can be
predetermined and relative to a framework used in the study (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007;
Creswell, 2009). While traditional qualitative research in the social sciences allows
themes to emerge through analysis, this study’s focus on the concept of social justice teacher leadership implies the use of predetermined concepts is appropriate (Creswell, 2009). For analysis, I utilized predetermined categories derived from existing literature on social justice teacher leadership and its six themes. As I worked with these, I simultaneously remained open to discover emergent categories and codes, as I realized the coding process should remain open and subject to change. Additionally, I considered unique incidences in the data that may be significant in their meaning (Stake, 1995).

I coded all data manually, using a word processor. This method was chosen because of my personal preference to be tactically and cognitively connected to research materials. During the coding process, cases were first considered individually and data was systematically mined using the six categories and considered for emergent themes. This coding process was implemented for each of the five cases and involved the close scrutiny of each sentence, judgment of which category was most applicable to the datum, and where data pieces began and ended (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Complications arose as some data overlapped categories, but determinations were made using context clues and researcher judgment. The outcome of this coding step was five charts, each outlining a case and its related data to each of six categories.

After this initial coding step, findings from individual cases were reorganized in a cross-case manner. I did this by developing six charts labeled by category and placing relevant data into those charts. At this stage, a resulting table for Critical Pedagogy, for example, contained all cross-case interview data relating to this category. These category tables were intentionally organized so that case attributions to the data pieces could be
determined and notes regarding the nature of the data could be made. Such organization facilitated the coding and writing processes.

My next step in cross-case analysis involved the determination of codes. I reviewed all data by category and used the notes column to document the meaning underlying each data piece. For example, while one unit of data may have generally addressed critical pedagogy as a theme, the participant’s language may have pointed to the importance of teacher investment in this teaching orientation and, thus, the data piece was coded as “teacher investment” under the category of Critical Pedagogy. My final step was to analyze notes to determine salient codes and make meaning of the data for each category. At the conclusion of the coding process, I was left with my research findings and primed for analysis.

Post-Data Analysis

After data analysis, research findings must be presented if one’s work is to be of any consequence. Merriam (2009) finds this stage of the qualitative research process to be especially intimidating for three reasons. First, qualitative data collection and analysis occurs simultaneously and continuously and has no clear end. Thus, researchers must be reflective enough to determine when saturation has been reached and findings are redundant. Additionally, the amount of data that needs to be sorted and carefully chosen to paint an illustrative narrative is great, which further complicates the feeling of completion. Finally, qualitative research scholarship offers no standard format in reporting findings.
Specific to writing up qualitative case study findings, rich description should be used to “take the reader into the case situation and experience – a person’s life, a group’s life, or a program’s life” (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002, p. 450). Such a vicarious experience should be conveyed to the reader because of case studies’ unique advantage of accessibility (Donmoyer, 1990). In other words, case studies offer readers experiences outside of their immediate access. Furthermore, rich description is necessary because case studies allow any given scenario to be viewed from various vantage points. And, perhaps most unique, case studies that are well written allow readers the opportunity to learn vicariously and without the barriers of personal defenses and resistances that actual experiences surface. For these reasons, it is especially imperative that qualitative case study findings be written in an illustrative manner.

The first step in approaching the writing process is to consider problems in knowing when it is time to stop collecting and analyzing data. Early in the research process, I determined a goal of nine participants and anticipated the coding process would consume a significant amount of time and perhaps even leave me questioning some of my research methods and findings. Soon into the research process, I found myself grappling with frustrations and revisiting my initial participant goal. Participant recruitment proved difficult as contacts often did not respond in what I considered a timely manner. Additionally, the limitation IRB imposed upon my ability to ask program directors about the nature of their nominees’ leadership caused me to have to consider directors’ interpretations of leadership in place of my own. I also consistently found myself concerned about the number of participants I was able to include, as time constraints...
limited my ability to extend the recruitment phase and one participant dropped out of the study. Despite these and other obstacles, I understood that ambiguity and uncertainty is inherent to beginning to develop a case study narrative and reminded myself of that when facing such feelings.

Donmoyer’s (1990) delineation of the advantages of case study reporting served as a reminder throughout the research process that thick and rich description of data is integral to a quality study. Before beginning the writing process, I anticipated initial feelings of uncertainty, but also that those would culminate in feelings of excitement as I near the end of my research project, discover myself as a capable and independent qualitative researcher, and found answers to my study’s research questions. Those feelings and beliefs were all found true. At the point when I faced my coded data and the task of organizing it all into meaningful writing, I found myself overwhelmed. I initially skipped the task of writing individual case profiles and addressed each theme as I considered the coded data I had organized into charts. I found myself genuinely enjoying this process as I was able to see how the data came together to create a meaningful, larger concept of social justice teacher leadership.

As I revisited individual cases, I found myself questioning the most effective manner to organize the case-specific data so that readers may first, develop meaningful and illustrative understandings of their backgrounds and perspectives and then, be primed for the cross-case analysis that was to follow. I found myself frustrated with organizing each case so that the reader was consistently presented with similar data and concepts across cases. One way I dealt with this frustration was to use the salient philosophies that
defined how each participant viewed leadership, social justice, and their future work as teachers as a thread to tie the case together. I allowed my personal creativity to take over and developed themed profiles for each case, centering on their unique perspectives and labeling cases to help readers develop coherent conceptualizations of each case. Another tactic I used to face this frustration was to simply release the need to control the data and tell the story of each case, without regard to consistent organization across cases. The result was uniquely defined cases that illustrate the similarities and differences across participants. While the research and writing process began with frustrations, I found myself facing feelings and obstacles with perseverance and creativity and the result was an enjoyable process and work to which I feel a strong sense of ownership and pride.

**Limitations**

All research has its limitations, some of which are unavoidable. First, this study is limited by the ambiguity of its topic. As the researcher, I was charged with making personal decisions and interpretations regarding the data because social justice teacher leadership is not only a relatively unfamiliar term among educators (current and future), but because its concepts are subjective and easily interchangeable with like terms. While qualitative research accounts for such interpretive nature, some intended meaning expressed in the data may become lost. Thus, while my voice was supposed to reflect those of participants’, the two will inevitably be intertwined due to the nature of the topic.

Additionally, time constrained the research project. The time frame within which I was able to collect and interpret data limited the number of participants I could recruit and interviews I could conduct. Ideally, several interviews would have been conducted
with each participant at various points over a period of time in an effort to double check the validity of findings and assess whether and how their understandings of social justice teacher leadership evolved.

Researcher bias serves as a final limitation. Merriam (2009) submits that the use of a human instrument in qualitative research methodology has its shortcomings and introduces biases that may impact the study. Instead of attempting to eliminate such biases, which some may argue is actually impossible, the author suggests “it is important to identify them and monitor them as to how they may be shaping the collection and interpretation of data” (p. 15). I implemented systematic checks for reliability and validity to ensure the ethical conduct of research. I used such methods as cross-checking codes with another coder and the triangulation of data. Furthermore, validity is secured when researchers are open and honest about their backgrounds, including their “gender, culture, history, and socioeconomic origins” (Creswell, 2009, p. 192).

**Significance of the Study**

This study is significant as it diversifies what is known to be teacher leadership and social justice leadership. As the concept of teacher leadership is still developing and social justice leadership has traditionally focused on positional figureheads, mainly school principals, this study helps to bridge the two and encourages the treatment of teachers as leaders of social justice. Thus, this study is conceptually influential in the fields of social justice leadership, teacher leadership, and teaching for social justice.

The current study also bolsters research on the development of preservice teachers within a dynamic and well-regarded teacher education program and develops a frame for
social justice teacher leadership for use by preservice teachers and within preparation departments. The findings of this study may be used as a guide for students seeking teacher education programs with a focus on social justice. Additionally, findings illuminate how teacher education treats leadership for social justice as well as the complex relationship between program and student.

Finally, as teacher preparation programs focus their attention on diversifying their student bodies and repertoires to meet the needs of a multicultural society, they may turn to research such as this to better understand the perspectives of future teachers and the areas of strength and weakness within teacher preparation programs. Keeping in mind the context of this particular study, those involved with the professional development of in-service teachers might find this study useful as they adapt its findings to foster skills and capacities of social justice teacher leadership in relative contexts.

**Summary**

The purpose of this study was to investigate how preservice teachers conceptualize social justice teacher leadership. In addition to preservice teachers, I hoped to understand how teacher preparation programs might better develop their students as future leaders in social justice. This chapter was dedicated to an examination of the study’s research design. This collective qualitative case study utilized data from interviews with preservice teachers to answer the study’s research questions regarding how social justice teacher leadership is conceptualized among a set of preservice teacher leaders. Findings that emerged from the research will be discussed in the next chapter.
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Education, above all other structures, has long been described as the great equalizer of human condition (Bercaw & Stooksberry, 2004; Conklin, 2008). In fact, Horace Mann, the father of the American common school, envisioned it as “the balance-wheel of the social machinery” over 150 years ago (Cremin, 1957, p. 50). While this characterization may have placed a cumbersome role on a social system wrought with inequality and complicated by growing social and political changes, today, Mann’s vision has moved closer to reality as social justice has emerged as a major concern in the American educational system (Brown, 2004; Furman, 2012; Howard, 2010; Jean-Marie, Normore, & Brooks, 2009).

Social justice that concerns itself with the equitable distribution of shared goods holds particular significance in public education as it attempts to correct inherent inequalities embedded in schools, communities, and society (Nieto, 2006; North, 2006). This orientation toward education holds a particularly compelling view of teachers as powerful advocates who possess the means to transform the life trajectories of their students and injustices of society (Bercaw & Stooksberry, 2004; Giroux & McLaren, 1996; Nieto, 2006; North, 2006; Webb, et al., 2004; Zeichner, 1996). The inherently complex, political and ethical nature of teaching places a burden on teacher education programs to adopt philosophies in social justice and prepare their students with the leadership qualities and skills inherent to such transformational teaching (Brown, 2005; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). In preservice years, teachers’ must couple knowledge of how schools perpetuate social inequalities with skills and competencies that reverse those
educational inequities as well as beliefs regarding their agency for change (Apple, 1989; Banks, 2007; Brown, 2004; Cochran-Smith et al., 2009; Milner, 2009; Swartz, 2003; Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

The current study considered this challenge to preservice teachers as it investigated how a set of future teachers, identified as leaders in their teacher education program, conceptualize social justice teacher leadership. In addition to providing insight into preservice teachers’ perceptions regarding social justice leadership, this study attends to gaps in theory and research. While teachers have long been known to lead through social justice work (see Ackerman & Mackenzie, 2006; Barth, 2001; Fairman & Mackenzie, 2012; Giroux & McLaren, 1996; Gose, 2012; Moore, 2007; Nieto, 2006; York-Barr & Duke, 2004), they have been conspicuously absent in theory and scholarship on social justice leadership (see Brown, 2004; Furman, 2012; Jean-Marie, 2008; Jean-Marie et al., 2009; Theoharis, 2007). Thus, the social justice teacher leadership framework developed and applied in this study has implications that extend from theory into how leadership for social justice is studied.

In the next section, I outline each of the five cases that provided data for this study. I then discuss how salient findings from this research study both support and inform existing scholarship on the six social justice teacher leadership concepts. Because leadership for social justice is highly contingent upon context (Bogotch, 2002; Brooks et al., 2007; Furman, 2012; Marshall et al., 2010), the framework’s tenets offer broad themes for the analysis of findings and often overlap in meaning and contribution to the framework. Thus, as will be evident in this discussion, significant findings may
contribute to more than one tenet of social justice teacher leadership. Moreover, readers must consider interpretations of these findings as this study approaches leadership for social justice through the perspective of preservice teacher leaders, a viewpoint currently absent in social justice leadership scholarship.

Individual Case Findings

Adam: The Normalizer

Adam is a Junior pursuing his teaching certification in Math Education. Since his Junior Year in high school he knew he wanted to be a teacher because of the exceptional teachers he had been exposed to throughout his schooling. Adam grew up in St. Louis and attended private school until transitioning into the local public school at the start of his 8th grade year, where he was a part of his schools’ gifted education programs.

Adam views his natural intelligence as the primary motivation in his own capability to lead as a student. When asked why he felt he was identified as a student leader by his program’s director he points to the quality of his contributions to class discussion, describing them as “rich, deep, and thoughtful” in the director’s eyes. He noted that his classroom contributions often invoke his classmates to either respond thoughtfully or to agree outright with his statements. Moreover, when asked what personal qualities he held that may incite others to identify him as a leader, Adam pointed to his intelligence. In certain academic contexts he found himself to be “the smartest person in the room”, which highlighted his role as a leader. In those contexts, classmates often asked him for insight into problems and help in understanding class work. He said his role as a helper developed into a leadership quality.
Adam described the rewards of his leadership in terms of personal benefit rather than service to a group or cause. For example, he got involved with the College of Education Student Ambassadors program, where he served in a leadership role, in response to an email that announced an opportunity for professional development. His initial interest in the organization and its mission was weak and he recalls reacting to the advertisement by thinking, “I’ll try my hand and see if I get it. If not, I’ll either try again or try to find something else”. Commitment to groups and missions with which he served as a leader did not seem to deepen with tenure of service. When asked how his leadership in student organizations was personally rewarding, Adam pointed to how much fun he had as well as the opportunity to meet new people, get free food during service hours, save money on meals, and the ability to serve in a leadership role while performing the same roles as a regular member of the organization. Moreover, he describes a lack of interest and concern with organizational missions after his tenure of formal leadership within the group has passed.

Adam puts his confidence in authority to create a more just society. To him, authority serves as a mechanism to regulate and normalize institutions. He believes citizens have a responsibility to a greater good and should actively utilize authority to rid themselves of individuals who disrupt order. He says community members should:

Take it upon themselves and probably reward people who have done good things and maybe point out the people who have done bad things. Maybe turn them over to the proper authorities…. So, just the community looking out for itself. Not necessarily taking either reward or punishment upon themselves, but kind of
directing the people who would be getting the reward or punishment to the proper area to receive that reward or punishment.

While Adam describes a just society as one where individuals get what they deserve, he cites evidence that we actually live in an unjust society. He uses an example of white collar criminals who have been exposed through a recent banking crisis. He found evidence of injustice in the way those who perpetrated the crimes handled the problems they created, saying they did not “fix [the problem] the way it was intended to be fixed”. Shifting focus, Adam acknowledges that class status matters in terms of social advantages. He says:

There are other cases where people who do great things, but because they are of lower status in society are kind of just brushed off. “Alright, well, congratulations you did that here's a pat on the back.” And, so, if someone else of greater standing does that they would get a little bit more of a reward for doing that same thing.

Adam acknowledges the inequalities class status imposes upon individuals and, simultaneously honors his faith in authority to create justice in an unjust society. While he mentions the realities of class status, he is more concerned with the equal hand of justice to force social order than the systemic disparities and cultural mismatches that may be a source of disorder.

Adam feels schools should function as a “societal normalizer”, where students learn what is right, wrong, and the consequences of their choices. He says, “Other than just educating the students about like basic math facts or basic social studies facts,
[schools’ purpose] is to sort of get them ingrained in societal norms. ‘Okay, this is how [one] should act or shouldn't act.’” Adam goes on to define social justice, by saying:

Social justice is more or less people getting what they deserve, for good or for bad. I know that’s not always going to happen, but ideally social justice would be, okay, if someone does something then they get punished in this way. And that way is uniform no matter who you are. Whether you're the highest standing citizen or the lowest standing citizen, you get the same treatment punishment reward or whatever you call it for whatever you've done.

Adam feels social justice involves fixed repercussions for personal choices. Further, he feels the circumstances under which choices are made should not be considered in determining the sanctions of those choices. Such authoritative notions of social justice and the purpose of schools complement Adam’s identity as a normalizing agent in his future role as a teacher.

Reflective of the trust he invests in formal authorities to achieve justice in society, Adam views leadership as reserved for veteran educators who have established tenure and hold positions of authority in the school setting (e.g., department chairs, coaches, and club sponsors). Adam consistently focuses on those in positions of authority when discussing leadership. Even in describing social justice teacher leadership, he uses an example of a principal acting as the leader in his created scenario. While Adam focuses on individuals in positions of formal authority in identifying school leaders, he does go on to recognize community involvement as a leadership activity, saying school
professionals who get involved in local government or community outreach (e.g., neighborhood watch programs) may also be leaders.

To Adam, a social justice teacher leader’s role is “to let [students] know what the social norms are, how to adapt and take on those social norms, how to act within those boundaries, what not to do, what to do”. Social justice teacher leaders help to advance the purpose of schools, as Adam defines it. As schools function as a “societal normalizer”, social justice teacher leaders promote and enforce social norms in the classroom or community. He says:

> With social justice teacher leadership, I see it more as, ‘This is what you should be doing. This is what you shouldn’t be doing. You are allowed to do either one you want, but just know that if you’re doing something you’re not supposed to be doing then that’s going to lead to something that you might not like. It might lead to something that you do like. It might lead to something better.’

Additionally, Adam describes good leaders as unemotional in their decision-making processes. For example, when asked to describe the benefits of leadership, he points to one’s overall confidence as a primary outcome. With confidence comes the ability to resolve conflict without getting angry or overly emotional and, perhaps, doing something one may later regret. Further, Adam believes a social justice teacher leader utilizes restraint in exchange for emotion when thinking critically about problems with which they are presented. He provides an example of a principal considering a teacher recommendation to suspend an unruly student. He says a social justice (teacher) leader
uses restraint in automatically taking the teacher recommendation when considering a student’s history of bad behavior and discipline. Such a principal might:

   Take themselves out of the situation and look at it, and be like ‘Ok, is this really worth sending a kid into detention or suspending them or sending them out of the classroom? Is it really worth it? Is it worth sending them to the office for potential discipline?‘

The retention of power is a concern of Adam’s as he considers his role as a future teacher. He views teachers as sort of bankers from whom students obtain knowledge, skill, and even power. Throughout interviews, he consistently cites classroom discipline as a personal concern and also as a tool to control, or normalize, student behavior. Further, Adam is occupied with the potential to give up his power as a classroom leader. When asked about the qualities of a social justice teacher leader, Adam uses a memorable lesson from one of his professors to illustrate how he might consider the passage of power in his future role as a teacher. He says:

   Every time you send a student out of the classroom to an administrator you’re giving up a bit of your power in that classroom. You’re giving it to that administrator. You’re telling the students that you don’t have control over the classroom and the administrator does. So, why should they respect you? …. So, just knowing when to give up that control.

Adam obviously values controlling knowledge and power in the classroom. This supports his belief that positional authority and normalization are critical components of school leadership whose authority inherently acts in the interest of justice.
Eliza: The Transformative Learner

Eliza is in the senior year of her pursuit of a teaching certificate in Art Education and is most interested in teaching in a middle school. She grew up in an upper-middle class home in a college town with a population around 120,000 and attended the city’s more socioeconomically prominent public school. Eliza makes clear that when considering prospects for career pursuits her work with children takes precedent over her work as an artist. She views her future work as an educator as a vehicle to make profound impacts in the lives of students at a time when adolescents struggle in their identities. She describes her decision to pursue a degree in education, instead of fine arts:

[In high school], I realized the core of everything I wanted to do was help kids, help teenagers, help them through this awkward timeframe that I’m going through, like all of these adults are helping me. And, most of them were teachers. And, so, I realized that the best way for me to help kids was through volleyball and art and to give back to them and be in their lives and give them the same opportunities that I had through volleyball and art to talk about their world, have an outlet, to learn all these life skills.

Through her work as an educator, Eliza hopes to encourage what she calls Aha Moments in her students. Such meaningful realizations about one’s self and world are achieved through transformative learning, which involves both skills listening and dialogue. Eliza wants art education to impact her future students as it has her. Art was an invaluable outlet to Eliza in her teen years, one that provided a forum, at what she calls an awkward and difficult time, to talk about her life, her world, and her thoughts.
Further, she felt fortunate to have teachers who would engage in critical conversations with her and encouraged her to think more deeply about her ideas. She says of her choice to pursue art education, “So, it just kept making sense aside from my other options of being just a psychologist or just an artist. The combination really just seemed to be the best for art ed.”

Eliza’s first identifiable leadership experience extends back to junior high when she served as the “undeclared team captain” of her school’s volleyball team. Eliza’s commitment to the team remains strong to this day as she continued to volunteer as a coach throughout high school and college and is now employed as a team coach. She says, “I’m their coach and I’m the leader and I’m there to make things happen”.

Eliza cites such qualities as her organization, agency, and investment in personal success as personal qualities that drive her leadership abilities. When asked why she believed she was nominated by her certification program director to participate in a study of student leaders, she said it was likely the extra effort she puts into her work, doing everything to the best of her ability, and even “doing extra things outside of the requirements to step up everyone’s game a little bit”. Additionally, Eliza noted that “being organized and being able to articulate your ideas to somebody, and being willing to make things happen that weren’t specifically asked of you” are critical to standing apart from others as a leader. Her notion of what it means to communicate articulately is complex and found throughout her expressions of teacher leadership and social justice education.
Articulate communication does not rest at eloquent speech with Eliza. To her, this skill reflects transformative learning and has several requisite components: (a) speaking up and avoiding the comfort of silence; (b) listening with the intent to understand and respond meaningfully; and, (c) clearly communicating issues and needs. When asked why it is important for her to articulate her ideas as a leader, Eliza responds:

I think, as a leader, it’s important that you are willing to step up and speak. It’s really easy to want to hide and kind of just exist. But, I would say a leader is somebody who is willing to step up and answer that question or offer an opinion, showing that you can listen to others’ opinions and respond to a situation. I think it also shows that fearless quality and being courageous enough to offer that opinion…. And, being willing to speak up, but being able to articulate your idea clearly is important as a leader so that your followers know what is going on, and what to do, and what you expect of them…. Really being able to articulate your ideas to others helps the whole group function or else you lose your purpose a little bit.

Eliza is conscious of the courage required to behave as a leader. She says with leadership comes responsibility, a lesson she has learned as she is growing and acquiring positions where she has found that her choice to lead implies she must accept the consequences of her decisions as a leader. Thus, there is bravery in leadership, “which is why it’s kind of an intimidating role to people”. Eliza says a leader must “bring [their] group over challenges, get things to happen even when they’re not easy” and even make personal sacrifices of time, money, or talent. Additionally, the threat that a leader may
see no return on their sacrifices remains constant. Regardless, Eliza finds value in such
personal investments for the good of a group and says, “Being willing to be a part of
[leadership] is, I think, a brave attribute. To be willing to possibly have no reward or a
negative consequence from all your work is pretty fearless”.

Eliza expresses her desire to connect with students who are unlike herself in many
ways. She hopes to develop meaningful relationships where transformative learning can
take place, but also fears the potential rejection associated with pursuing diverse
experiences. Eliza has already exemplified the bravery she finds important in such
leadership, as she has made personal choices in her life that have required her to fight the
norms of her social groups. For example, after having served as a leader on her school’s
volleyball team in middle school, she was expected to make the transition to lead her
teammates on the high school team. Instead, she made the socially controversial decision
to join a volleyball club that was mostly populated by female students from the “poor
public high school”. Diversity in experience was the motivating factor in this choice.

I just kind of wanted a break and to meet new people. And, I wanted this other
coach instead. And, it was kind of refreshing to not be with those same girls I had
been with throughout these school transitions. It was nice to kind of come into
something new for a few nights a week.

Eliza makes conscious choices to pursue transformative learning experiences by
confronting uncomfortable situations with bravery and seeking opportunities for diverse
experiences. She highlights the need for leaders to behave unconventionally, challenge
norms, and grow as individuals through her expressions of personal values and the
critical perspectives she adopts based on her own experiences.

Eliza’s definition of social justice “relies on the idea of equal opportunity and
making sure that everyone is presented with equal opportunities regardless of disability,
race, gender, any identity that they have.” Eliza views schools to function as purveyors
of opportunity, or to be active in creating social justice. As far back as her middle school
years, Eliza began grappling with concepts of social justice. In recognizing that there
was a student group that served only African American students, she and her peers posed
questions to teachers centered on concepts of privilege/oppression, fairness, access, and
racial equity. Similar concerns arose in high school when applying for colleges and
scholarships. It was during this time, when she began engaging in critical conversations
with teachers, she began to realize the impact educators have on children’s lives. Now,
as a preservice teacher who has a deeper understanding of society and disadvantaged
populations, Eliza has made sense of the programs she was once critical of.

I’ve learned a lot about achievement gaps. I’ve learned a lot about different
backgrounds. I’ve learned a lot about resources and poverty. I’ve learned a lot
about how African American students, especially boys, have a lot of unnecessary
special education referrals and tend to receive a lot more disciplinary referrals
compared to the student body. So, maybe that was something the teachers were
trying to work on. [Also], Trying to get families to integrate more into the
[school] community …. I didn’t really get that as a student. Whereas, now I see
that being a tool for a higher purpose for the school. I just didn’t understand that as a student.

In identifying the qualities of a social justice teacher leader, Eliza relies heavily upon the concept of transformative learning. In fact, to be a quality teacher of any sort, she believes teachers must consistently engage in critical dialogue and self-reflection with students, parents, and themselves. Eliza suggests having other teachers, preferably veterans, observe one’s teaching practices to identify biases and patterns in behavior. Such actions have the power to fix and prevent problematic issues in the classroom. In terms of critical dialogues, she recognizes the importance of establishing open two-way lines of communication where families and teachers both receive, process, and send information back and forth.

Eliza’s goal as a future educator is to help students develop tools to navigate their own worlds and express their ideas. However, Eliza realizes student empowerment is not limited to taking charge to create the change they desire; such power must include knowledge of appropriateness and context. She hopes to use her classroom as a setting where students are able to grapple with controversial issues involving the world, their experiences, and identities and to illustrate how such issues are received by others and must be delicately handled to create meaningful impact to both the student and their networks. This complex understanding drives Eliza to consider how censorship might influence the culture of her school and, therefore, her classroom. She is devoted to the ideals of self-expression and learned tolerance as a function of social justice in her work
and plans to utilize the transformative leadership skill of critical discourse to navigate sensitive topics that arise in her work.

**Wendy: The Helper**

Wendy is in her junior year of college and is pursuing a teaching certification in English Education. Growing up in a middle class home, her mother is an elementary school principal in a town with a population around 120,000 and her father is a teacher at an elite private school in St. Louis. Wendy attended what she termed “diverse schools” until she entered college. She holds a few leadership positions within the College of Education and attributes her leadership abilities to her openness to receive input and feedback on group management, helpful nature, organizational abilities, and skill in public speaking.

Wendy is most concerned with maintaining professionalism while also acting as a resource for students who might need support in their personal lives. She believes that the best teachers lead through their helpful and empathetic nature, which requires that they learn about students’ nonacademic lives. Still, she is conscious of the need to maintain boundaries.

You don’t want to be too friendly with students for multiple reasons. For one, it gets to be inappropriate if you’re too friendly. Two, they might not respect you as a teacher anymore because you put yourself more on their level as a friend. And also it’s just not meant to be that way.

Wendy believes good leadership can be both formal and informal. Further, in her view, title and status do not imply good leadership. Instead, a good leader is someone...
who inspires and collaborates with followers. They are open minded and active listeners while they help others achieve goals. Wendy defines active listening as both engaging care through empathy and an intentional purpose to comprehend another’s words and feelings. An open mind involves being able to step outside of one’s thoughts and feelings and engaging the same empathetic orientation that active listening requires. Wendy believes a good teacher leader seeks feedback from students, is inspirational, has students’ interests at heart, strives to teach individuals (not lessons), and develops an environment where they serve as the helping hand to followers, including other teachers.

Wendy defines social justice as the repercussions of making decisions regarding social norms. The outcome is that the “the bad guy gets in trouble and the good guy gets noticed for being a victim”. To her, a STJL is empathetic and level-headed and has the ability to listen actively. Such listening allows a social justice teacher leader to be as helpful to others as possible. She illustrates how such teacher leaders might meet students’ needs outside of the classroom.

Sometimes high school can be really hard. There are instances where kids just need something. If someone finds out that they are pregnant they are going to need help with that situation. And, you could force your student to sit in your class and learn what you’re teaching that day, but they’re really not going be learning, they’re going to be thinking about [the pregnancy] because they just found out. So, it would be better to talk with the student for a second, like, ‘Do you want to go to the counselor?’ Ask them what they need to be sure that you
are meeting kids’ needs. I mean that’s also really hard because they all have different needs.

Wendy enjoys reading and while she hopes to inspire the same passion in her students, she foresees her future classroom as a place where ideas are deliberated through literature. “English can be so deep,” she says, recognizing the potential in her discipline. She hopes her classroom will be a place where students analyze texts for themes they might recognize in their own lives, such as struggles racism or understanding social class. This prospect is most exciting for Wendy in her role as a future teacher.

Society is a daunting place for Wendy. When asked if she felt schools should prepare students for society as it is or empower them to change it, she responds, “It’s going to be really hard to make major change”. She explains that while individuals may desire to challenge the status quo, their actions must be nuanced and gradual and, therefore, they may never see the outcomes of their passion and efforts. One cannot challenge their world as it works all of the time, she says, that would be “exhausting” and “you’re going to fail a lot”. She uses a literary example to illustrate her thoughts:

Just as one person it’s really hard to make changes in a world of so many people. And, I feel like I have so many literary examples of everything. But, in the Chocolate War, the whole theme is like if Jerry should disturb the universe. And, so, through the whole book he is challenging the status quo and then at the end, everything is back to normal. And, nothing happened because the status quo is strong.
**Lana: The Critical Transformationalist**

Lana is a Junior, pursuing a teaching certification in social studies education. She grew up in poor, working class family that consisted of her mother and herself and a close support system of her grandmother, aunt, and cousins. While she moved several times, Lana spent the majority of her life in a small Missouri town of about 20,000 residents, where her family network essentially represented the town’s non-white population. She cites her personal experiences and family as sources of meaningful education that she did not receive in formal school settings. Lana has strong commitments to her Christian faith as well as working in an urban school and living in the same community in which her future students will live.

One theme that sets Lana apart from others is her faith as a Christian. Time and again her faith is brought up as the foundational element in who she is, why she is a leader, and how that manifests through her spirit and actions. Before Lana became a Christian, professional income was a significant factor in her decision on a major. With time, however, the desire to serve took precedence as she grew to realize what she wanted to accomplish through her work.

After becoming a Christian, I realized money wasn’t really the case. I knew a lot of situations where people were helped without money. I guess after becoming a Christian, it was more, how can I serve God? And not, how can I serve myself with my money?
Lana goes on to explain that teaching allows her to engage in such service. Furthermore, teaching in an inner city context allows her to serve individuals and groups who are in need of her services. She says, “I’m not going to any other school even if it’s better”.

Lana invests herself in prayer, which helps guide her decision making. When she reached college, it was prayer that led her to pursue a teaching degree. She speaks of changing her major:

“When I got here, I just kept praying about it and I was like, you know, I know I wasn’t supposed to do this. I just know I was supposed to teach. Finally, I just changed my major. I need to teach. I’m not supposed to do psychology and get a doctorate and teach at a university. I’m just supposed to teach.”

When asked how she might manage conflicts that arise as a result of her work as a public school teacher and her strong identity as a Christian as well as those that are inherent to leadership work, again, Lana turns to her faith and prayer as a resource. She says, “God first. That is kind of how I deal with things”. In fact, when Lana feels unsure or conflicted about any issue related to her work as a teacher, prayer is her most dependable resource.

Lana has been recognized as a leader in many capacities (formal and informal) and indicates personal qualities as the primary factor in such recognition. When asked why she felt she has been directly identified as a student leader, she points to her ability to express herself through positive actions and words. She explains:

“When people get to know me, they see that I’m just a different person than they expect. I’m not the kind of person who is just going to talk the entire time, or just
talk for no reason. And [my choices] won’t be dictated by what’s going on around me. And, so, I think people see that.

In one of her leadership roles, she gained feedback regarding her performance and was praised on her inherent abilities to connect with others and articulate ideas in a manner that encourages understanding among group members. She recognizes these skills are particularly useful when there is discord in thoughts and feelings and holds the ability to manage such situations exceptionally well.

When other people aren’t feeling it, in the way that they’re coming to me or speaking to me, I can take what they’re feeling and I can connect with people in a way that other people can’t… And, so, even when someone has a disagreement with me on something, they can understand at least where I’m coming from.

Lana further explains meaningful communication involves the ability to analyze messages, uncover motivations and emotions, and engage thoughtfulness and understanding.

Lana views teacher leadership and social justice as inextricably linked. Further, social justice teacher leadership implies good teaching. In considering her future work, she expresses good social studies teachers equip students to be critical of their worlds and analyze how social phenomena affect themselves and others. The prospect of working with students to build tools to this end excites Lana. She holds a strong sense of critical pedagogy and wants to empower her students to make the changes in their lives that will lead to transformational experiences. Lana says, with a strong social studies education,
one can “look at society, analyze it, and then see how to succeed”. She likens finding success in society, an individually defined standard, to playing a game.

If you can teach people how to play the game, how to analyze society, and how to see things, you can teach them to be successful. Even when they’re not supposed to be successful, even when every statistic is against them, we can teach them how to think… And, so, if you can teach them how to think, and of course, you’re smart, and then you can succeed. And, so, I like how social studies allows me to do that.

To Lana, good social studies teachers (who act as leaders in social justice) coach students on how to think critically and transfer the book knowledge they obtain in schools to their everyday lives.

While she believes she had good teachers, she does not feel the social studies education she received was critical enough. She would have liked to address social inequalities and analyze societal structures including how policies affect groups of people. Looking back, she would have liked to have been pushed out of the “bubble” of high school to understand the “real world” and how it operates. She hopes to do this as an educator. For example, she intends to address systems like capitalism in her classroom and have students analyze why it causes controversy.

Because Lana is driven to live and serve in an inner city school context, she considers the likely backgrounds of her students when conceptualizing her work as a future social studies teacher. Further, part of being a good teacher is actively obtaining
knowledge of individual students’ lived realities, which she parallels with being a Christian. She explains:

That goes back to my faith, I’m big about the community. It’s kind of like the whole thing of I need to care not only about the students, but the situations they’re in. So, I feel like it’s impossible, being a Christian, to only care about the individual or only care about society.

To Lana, a good teacher doesn’t stop at knowing their students, but immerses themselves into their home lives and cultures to develop bonds and create partnerships with students and community members.

Paula: The Collaborator

To Paula, an aspiring special education teacher in her senior year, good teaching is all about partnerships. Though she was adopted from El Salvador as an infant, Paula grew up in an upper-middle class home in a suburb of St. Louis and aligns her culture with White and middle class groups. Paula attended private schools until she reached college. She reflects fondly on her experiences at her all-girl, Catholic high school and attributes her passion for service and desire to work in special education to experiences she obtained during that time in her life. She says, “I think the teachers I had there shaped who I am today”.

Paula evolved a deeper understanding of her high school motto, “Servium”, through maturity and experience. She remembers a common phrase students would say, “120 and you’re done”, as a shared thought that dismissed the meaning of service the graduation requirement of 120 service hours intended to instill in students. She admits to
not fully realizing the impact she could have on others until volunteering in a special education classroom. This was a transformational experience in her life and shaped her career decision. When asked why she settled on teaching as a career, Paula says, aside from providing academic foundations, she wants to be a part of shaping students into well-rounded individuals with strong morals who are self-actualized. She describes teaching with such a service orientation: “I just think that with teaching we are everything, we are their counselor, we are their mother, we are their doctor, you know. By doing that every day you are giving back to them, even if you don't think you are.”

Paula parallels her motivation to teach special education students to the feeling general education teachers get when their students succeed. A major factor in her pursuit of special education, however, lies in her ability to give specialized, one-on-one attention to students who have basic needs. In comparing her future work against mainstream educators’, she says:

I like giving a student one-on-one attention. And, in the classrooms I'm in now the most students I've had at one time is four, which I love…. I'm sure for general education teachers to see students do well in this certain area is what keeps them going, like that's what they love to see. But to see a student write their name, you know, after working on it for like a year, that would be what I would want. That's what would make me happy or would make me feel like ‘oh my gosh, I helped them write their name!’ So, I guess it’s just the same thing, but to a different degree I guess. So, that's why I chose special ed. And, even with each disability
you get to see how they’re more unique as a person. You get to see their different personalities. I love the kids I'm around all the time.

Paula stood out as a leader early on in her high school career. One teacher, her school’s student council adviser, cited Paula’s initiative, desire to create change, and ability to cooperate to create change as leadership qualities unique to Paula. This teacher served as a mentor as Paula emerged as a leader and was integral in developing her concepts of leadership.

She pushed me and she knew that I had those leadership abilities starting freshman year. She taught me, like, ‘Okay, you know when to lead. Now, you have to know when to step back and let others lead, because that's a part of it.’ That's a part of being a leader is letting others lead as well. So, I feel like that has a lot to do with how I am today.

Those same characteristics are what Paula believes lead her college program director to identify her as a student leader. In addition, Paula believes (and receives personal feedback) that she has emerged as a dependable leader with strong communication skills and a strong value in professional collaboration. Since those early notions of leadership, Paula’s definition has expanded to involve the willingness to adopt roles to lead by example, take on responsibilities to the benefit of the group, and organize with colleagues to achieve goals. Further, leadership in her ideal school would involve collaborations between teachers that focus on issues that advance the welfare of students, inside and outside of their academic lives.
Communication and cooperation are fundamental to the collaboration Paula finds critical to her future work as a special education teacher. Positioning herself as a resource to and regularly speaking with mainstream classroom teachers before there is an immediate need helps to create a collaborative environment, where her work as specialist is made easier.

There are going to be teachers who are awesome to work with and there are the ones who are going to make you want to pull your hair out. But you’re going to have to communicate with those teachers just as much as the other ones …. Just making sure that from Day One with those teachers, and really all of them, let them know that you’re there to help and check in throughout the year… So when situations do come up, that they’re not like, ‘Oh, I’ve never seen this person and all of a sudden they’re in my room asking about behavior management.’ They know your face, they’ve seen you in and out, so when a problem occurs they’re like, ‘ok, she’s always asking what she can do to help so here’s a situation where she can help.’ So, that kind of would make things easier when you have to work together.

Social justice involves cultural awareness, to Paula. She paused for some time as she contemplated her definition of a social justice teacher leader and settled on it being the act of teaching students about diversity and the differences found in people. Further, social justice teacher leaders collaborate by organizing their thoughts and efforts around issues pertaining to students and regularly communicating them in formal and informal settings. One step a teacher must take in order to behave as a social justice teacher leader
is to become aware of personal biases that may influence their perspectives and, in turn, their teaching. Paula suggests making a list of all of the biases one might have and using that list to reflect and then acting on mitigating the influences they may have on one’s work. Being a social justice teacher leader also requires the tolerance of discomfort. Paula says, “Being uncomfortable sometimes is okay and you learn from those situations”. Teachers may be faced with discomfort when issues of cultural diversity are raised and social justice teacher leaders must grapple with those feelings and address such topics directly and with intention.

Paula finds value in focusing on creating connections with the families so that each of her future students is able to leverage a strong support network around them. Further, she believes collaboration with other teachers and administrators is critical to doing the most good for her future students. Sharing ideas, experiences, and making suggestions based on research evidence should be the purpose of such in-school partnerships. She says as teachers gain professional experience, it is important that they stay up to date on research-based practices. One way to do that is by developing relationships and sharing knowledge with new teachers who have just graduated.

Due to her preparation as a special education professional, Paula feels confident in communicating and developing relationships with parents. She says her program focuses on parent-teacher collaborations and she feels prepared to be a part of difficult meetings. If she stays committed to growing partnerships with families from the beginning, however, she feels she is investing effort that will help to set a tone for the
duration of those relationships. Further, she realizes that families play a significant role in her development as a social justice teacher leader. She says:

If you already have that strong relationship with a family or parents that are from a different culture … They will most likely be more than willing to, you know, talk to you about that kind of thing [cultural differences]. So, that’s why it’s good to start out with that good relationship from Day One, so you can ask those kinds of questions.

While families serve as a resource in integrating culture into her collaborative work as a social justice teacher leader, Paula believes practice as an educator is most invaluable knowledge resource she needs to behave as the best teacher she can be.

This section provided insight into the five cases used in this study. Adam, a math education major, was nicknamed The Normalizer for his strong interests in the power and authority of individuals who help formal and positional leadership positions. His conceptualization of the purpose of schools is founded in their function to normalize student behavior. Adam is concerned with retaining power as a teacher and the use of consequences to control students in his classroom. Conversely, Eliza, nicknamed The Transformative Leader, focuses her future work on enabling student expression through personal relationships with them. Since deciding to become a teacher in high school, she has been committed to the teaching as a means to help children navigate and make sense of their worlds just as she did in her middle and high school years. To Eliza, an ongoing process of transformative learning is critical to developing the meaningful relationships that found students’ security and capacity in self-expression.
Wendy, The Helper, is pursuing a teaching certification in English education and finds herself most concerned with maintaining professional boundaries in her future work. She believes good leaders are helpful to others, which involves the ability to be an active listener. Wendy hopes to use literature in her English classroom as tools to consider complex themes, such as racism and authority, which students may recognize in their lives and larger society. A classmate of Wendy’s, Lana, has been dubbed The Critical Transformationalist. Interviews suggest Lana holds two passions: Her Christian faith and social studies education. She feels she was called to teaching and, further, serving as a social studies educator, through her faith in God and Christian ideals. Lana sees social justice teacher leadership as an inevitability of good teaching. Further, social studies education is an exciting profession to Lana as it will allow her to help students build tools to analyze and transform their lived realities in a complex society.

Paula, The Collaborator, had her first experiences as a leader in a special education classroom as part of a high school service requirement and has since been committed to pursuing a teaching certification in the area. She views partnerships as critical to her work as a specialist as she recognizes she must cultivate and strengthen networks surrounding her students. Paula feels confident in creating collaborative partnerships with parents and understands she will have to use skillful communication and cooperation with general education teachers to help develop student-focused networks. While these five cases outline distinctive individuals with unique backgrounds and orientations towards teaching and social justice, common themes across the cases
have been identified. The next section will offer cross-case findings of those themes using social justice teacher leadership as a framework.

**Cross-Case Findings**

**Critical Pedagogy**

Scholars point to critical pedagogy, an approach to classroom instruction that seeks the deconstruction of oppressive societal forces, as foundational in fostering the ideals of social transformation among students (Apple, 1989; Apple & Beane, 1995; Bercaw & Stooksberry, 2004; Hackman, 2005). Critical pedagogy is a tenet of social justice teacher leadership and requires teachers provide students with information on the nature of power, how individuals acquire status in society and to contest injustices (Apple, 1989; Bartolome, 2004; Bercaw & Stooksberry, 2004; Hackman, 2005). Findings from this study suggest participants viewed their work through critical pedagogy, in part, as empowering students through knowledge of and adherence to social norms, which provides a foundation and impetus for change. Participants believe they must teach their future students social norms with intent to provide tools for survival in a society that requires some level of compliance even in dissent. Additionally, they believe students should be instructed on the power they possess in relation to their multiple statuses (e.g., student, worker, and teenager) and the power and oppression that accompanies those statuses. Existing literature on critical pedagogy ignores such intentional norming of students. While language surrounding the nature of critical pedagogy is change-oriented and focuses on the deconstruction of existing, oppressive forces (social norms included) (Apple, 1989; Bercaw & Stooksberry, 2004; Hackman, 2005).
findings from this study suggest when students understand existing instruments of control they are equipped to retain power. Moreover, students become further empowered when such knowledge are subsequently negotiated as tools in finding success.

Current research findings and existing research suggest the employment of critical pedagogy requires a set of teacher skills and dispositions (see Bartolome, 2004; Bercaw & Stooksberry, 2004; Delpit, 1995; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1997; Nieto, 2000; Milner, 2003). For example, teachers must be able to connect macro-level problems to their own lives and help their students do the same (Delpit, 1995; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1997; Nieto, 2000). Findings from this study support this view, as the teacher leaders consistently illustrated their critical consciousnesses. Participants also discuss teacher investment in a more practical manner. For example, Eliza believes teachers should couple consciousness of students’ needs with time to create differentiated lessons that meet individual students’ needs. Lana expounds on teacher investment and suggests teachers must perform the same tasks and to the same the level they expect of their students. Such investment positions teachers to lead by example in their classrooms, schools, and larger communities and equips them to help students learn as teachers are expanding their knowledge alongside their counterparts.

To dismantle oppressive forces using critical pedagogy, social justice teacher leaders must encourage students to develop and utilize critical analysis and multiple lenses, including ones that analyze power dynamics, to understand course content and its historical contexts (Bercaw & Stooksberry, 2004; Hackman, 2005). Findings from this
study support this view of critical pedagogy and frame critical thinking as empowering to their future students. Additionally, findings support scholarship that suggests when students are able to connect abstract course content to larger social issues and their own lives, critical pedagogy has been effective (Apple, 1989; Delpit, 1995; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1997; Nieto, 2000). Participants expressed value in developing connections between students’ classroom experiences and life outside and beyond their schooling. Further, critical pedagogy that develops connections between curriculum, students’ lives, and society requires teachers use complex sources of information that reflect a broad set of ideas and data and unconventional educational resources that push students to legitimize alternative perspectives (Apple, 1989; Hackman, 2005). Participants reflect this view of instruction and identify varied sources of information in their expressions of social justice teacher leadership, expressing value in information that comes from sources outside school walls and in the form of cultural knowledge.

This study’s most significant finding regarding critical pedagogy involves the careful use of social norming as a tool for social change, a view that is absent in existing literature. Additional findings support an existing approach to critical pedagogy. Research to this point has largely focuses on developing teacher orientations for critical pedagogy, including the critical and personal engagement with dominant ideologies, like meritocracy and White privilege (Bartolome, 2004). Findings from the current project adopt a more general perspective on such orientations and suggest teachers should invest time and effort in their work in order to engage critical pedagogy. Further findings align more succinctly with existing research and support the empowering students by
developing their critical analysis skills as well as finding and creating linkages between classroom experiences, students’ lives, and larger society.

**Critical Thinking and Analysis of Oppression**

Critical consciousness (Freire, 1970) and political and ideological clarity (Bartolome, 2004) define individuals’ capacity for critical thinking for social justice. Findings from this study show participants framed personal transformational experiences as critical to their notions of how society is unjustly structured. These findings support existing research related to social justice teacher leadership, as Bartolome (2004) found teachers’ critical thinking and ability to analyze oppression fundamental to their work in critical pedagogy. Teachers must be aware of social structures and the related placement of individuals within those structures (Bartolome, 2004) as well as the relationship between macro-level problems and their own lives (Delpit, 1995; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1997; Nieto, 2000). Findings from this work suggest participants held such critical consciousnesses as they detailed experiences that shaped the way they view society and oppression. For example, Lana highlights an early experience as a Black American teen in her predominantly White, small, Midwestern hometown as particularly significant in shaping her notions of race and culture. She uses an episode where two White men verbally threatened her and her Black cousin to illustrate the nature of race and culture in her hometown. Lana understands the racial tensions and overt use of racially oppressive symbols in public spaces (e.g., Confederate colonel as her public school system’s mascot) as indicative of her community’s hostile racial culture. Her ability to understand the injustice that underpins her community’s culture through
expression of a transformational experience supports existing research that posits, to behave as leaders in social justice, teachers must be able to draw connections between larger social problems and their own lives (Delpit, 1995; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1997; Nieto, 2000).

Current research findings also support existing knowledge that teachers who wish to lead using social justice must critically engage with dominant and oppressive ideologies (Bartolome, 2004) and meaningfully reflect with their own cultures (Bercaw & Stooksberry, 2003; Milner, 2003). Eliza shows evidence of such engagement as she discusses the evolution of her political and ideological clarity (see Bartolome, 2004) by identifying early contentions between pride in her White privileges and unfair affirmative action that gave her Black classmates access to supplementary educational resources and opportunities. Through critical dialogues with teachers and transformative experiences, Eliza’s consciousness developed as her clarity shifted toward an understanding of the advantages embedded in her identity as an upper-middle class, White female and the nature of oppression for poor, Black Americans.

This study supports existing research related to teachers’ critical thinking and analysis of oppression as a part of teaching and leading with social justice. Study participants used transformational experiences to illustrate evolutions in their political and ideological clarity and associated growing critical consciousnesses, as they pertained to their knowledge of oppressive social structures. Further, participants demonstrated awareness of the historical and complex nature of inequalities found in society. Research suggests such awareness and perspectives equips teachers to understand how power
manifests in their work and use course content as a tool to create possibilities in students’ lives (Bartolome, 2004; Hackman, 2005; Moll & Arnot-Hopffer, 2005).

**Transformative Learning**

Findings from this research support existing theories on transformative learning as a tool in social justice leadership while also deepening knowledge of how to use critical self-reflection and dialogue in this growth process. Transformative learning involves the acquisition and manipulation of information that disrupts prior learning and reshapes deeply set knowledge and beliefs (Davis, 2006). Teachers who engage in such reflective learning seek to understand their teaching contexts and interrogate their knowledge and assumptions, in turn, changing how they see themselves and the world (Brown, 2005; Gay & Kirkland, 2003). Participants in this study valued dispositions regarding attempts to acquire information that challenged their knowledge, including attempts to understand cultures and contexts and maintaining an open orientation to diversity. For example, Adam suggests teachers’ first task in a new school context should be to adapt themselves to the school culture, asking themselves where they fit in. Additionally, he says, teachers should identify their own values, assess those of the community in which they work, and use these comparative understandings to inform their teaching. To Adam, the process of transformative learning is dynamic. It requires teachers actively seek knowledge about their working contexts and, in coupling that such knowledge with self-awareness, allow that knowledge to affect themselves and their work.

Additionally, findings support existing research as participants value the active search for and creation of scenarios within which they gain new insights and information
and push themselves to grow as educators (see Davis, 2006). Salient findings from this work also suggest transformative learning involves the deconstruction of bias, a role stated in existing research. In order to deconstruct bias, participants expressed they must first reflect on and search for implicit assumptions in their work. Deconstruction then occurs when knowledge and beliefs are reshaped using information they obtained from their understanding of cultures and contexts, openness to diversity, and approach to learning opportunities (Brown, 2005; Davis, 2006; Gay & Kirkland, 2003). To complete the perspective transformation that is central to transformative learning, teachers must use tools of critical self-reflection and critical dialogue (Mezirow, 1991). Participants’ general views on the roles of transformative learning support existing literature, however, their more focused perspectives suggest reconceptualizations of critical self-reflection and critical discourse may be in order.

**Critical self-reflection.** Critical self-reflection, which requires an active analysis of personal backgrounds, experiences, assumptions, and biases that inform practice and contexts enables teachers to identify their strengths and opportunities for growth (Giroux, 1996; Hackman, 2005). The current research supports this existing theory, however, tightly couples the potential self-reflective outcome of the identification of need for growth with Barth’s (1999) view of leadership as a shared endeavor. Barth suggests as individuals engage with others to make sense of their work, they reveal the communal nature of leadership, a view that may be particularly relevant to teachers at the beginning of their careers (e.g., preservice teachers).
The preservice teachers in this study believed that by reflecting critically on their dispositions, skills, and competencies they could determine the weight of their contributions to any given leadership context. They felt resolved in their ability to lead as followers, or silently, when others were better equipped to serve as the group’s forerunner. Lana sums up this unique perspective on social justice teacher leadership and transformative learning in describing a leader as someone who is “very self-aware… can take action and knows how to get things done, but [also] knows how to step back when they need to, to let someone else lead”. This finding is dually significant because participants viewed leadership through following as a method of action in their social justice leadership work. When framed as action in the interest of social justice, leading by following emerges as servant leadership. I will address this significant finding again as I discuss how participants viewed taking action.

**Critical discourse.** The current study also contributes to literature on critical discourse. Mezirow (2003) characterizes transformative learning and critical discourse by their use of authentic understanding through communicative learning. Through communicative learning, judgment is avoided and meaningful understanding is used in dialogue that seeks critical interpretations of experience for the progressive development of self, others, and systems. Findings from this study support existing views that critical discourse involves listening with intent to understand (see Mezirow, 2003, 1997; Shields, 2003). However, while literature focuses largely on the receipt and processing of information through dialogue, findings suggest the use of articulate communication is equally as significant in critical discourse for teacher leaders.
Participants recognized the inevitabilities of disagreements in their views of critical discourse and found skills in compromise and peaceful disagreement to be integral to critical discourse processes, something existing literature ignores. In fact, Paula believes effective critical discourse is most likely to occur in working environments were compromise is inherent to group culture. Moreover, disagreement is a natural outcome of interpersonal interaction and, thus, the careful management of tensions is essential to creating understanding between parties as well as civil and collaborative group environments. Lana and Eliza suggest articulate communication should be used in such strained situations and otherwise. Lana describes an emotional intelligence that founds the meaningful communication of ideas while Eliza recommends using speech that is “clear and concise”, “productive and calm” and avoids opinions and insults.

Research findings from the current study illustrate some areas for consideration in knowledge surrounding transformative learning. While participants’ general views of the growth process support existing literature (see Bercaw & Stooksberry, 2004; Davis, 2006; Mezirow 2003, 1997; Shields, 2003), they suggest a new outcome for critical self-reflection: the determination that their leadership is best used in supportive, even passive, following roles. Findings further suggest discussions of critical dialogue should extend beyond the thoughtful receipt of information to its delivery, using articulate communication that is clear, meaningful, and inoffensive. Additionally, the handling of disagreements was a salient concern of study participants, as they believe in the careful management of inevitable discord with compromise and peace.
Student-Centered Learning Environments

Existing literature on student-centered learning environments suggests teachers must create safe contexts that value diversity and use culturally relevant and responsive curriculum and practices (Gay, 2000; Hackman, 2005). In doing so, teachers must recognize students’ personal identities as they shape their backgrounds, experiences, and, therefore, needs in educational settings. Findings from this study support this view in building student-centered learning environments as participants consistently expressed that learning their students’ lived realities would equip them, as teachers, to support their needs inside and outside the classroom.

In fact, Lana describes learning about her students and placing knowledge of their lives at the center of her work as inextricably linked to her future work as a social justice teacher leader. She suggests students and their lived realities are analogous to individuals and society, and says the two cannot be separated and because of this, teachers must understand students’ experiences and backgrounds. Lana suggests such realities inform students’ educational needs and she commits herself to their consistent incorporation into her work. While current research supports this view of student-centeredness (see Ayers, 1998; Gay, 2000; Hackman, 2005; Nieto, 2000; Shor, 1986), participants did not express value in or knowledge of a subtenant of student centeredness: the creation and maintenance of democratic learning environments.

Democratic classrooms. If social justice teacher leaders wish to transform existing, oppressive norms through their work, they must understand that current norms actively silence voices outside of dominant culture and aim to foster voice among
marginalized groups (Bercaw & Stooksberry, 2004; Nieto, 2006). This approach to developing a deeply democratic environment values and dignifies individuals, their expressions and participation, and further requires individuals to exercise choice in matters in which their lives are affected (Maxcy, 1995). Thus, if student-centeredness legitimizes students’ lives in educational settings and democratic schooling involves the voice and participation of all individuals, including students (see Larson & Ovando, 2001; Maxcy, 1995; Mullen, 2008), conversations about student-centered learning environments (i.e., classrooms and schools) should acknowledge student contributions to such settings. If they do not, these contexts fail to be deeply democratic in nature. While the social justice teacher leadership framework includes a democratic dimension in its description of student-centered learning environments, the current study yielded no significant findings regarding the use of student voice and perspective in collaborations.

Empowerment and Self-Efficacy

When asked specifically about their confidences in developing relationships, motivating others, and creating change in various contexts and in the interest of social justice, participants were inconsistent in expressing their levels of assurance related to the number of contexts presented. However, research did emerge salient factors that participants felt empowered their work as social justice teacher leaders and these findings support existing research.

Kreisberg (1992) theorizes empowerment to involve individuals’ rejection of inequality and domination through power and related increased control of their own lives. As individuals become empowered, they develop positive self-worth, confidence, and
efficacy (Bandura, 1977; Gibson & Dembo, 1984; Kreisberg, 1992; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). Thus, findings regarding participant empowerment inform the development of positive teacher self-efficacy as it relates to social justice leadership work. These findings are further significant as research shows teacher self-efficacy indicates personal levels of effort, persistence, resilience, and stress (Bandura, 1977) and early beliefs (developed in preservice years) are indicative of long-lasting orientations and behaviors (Bandura, 1977; Tuchman & Isaacs, 2011).

Participants consistently cited tenure and experience as inservice teachers in their expressions of factors that empowered their social justice leadership work, which supports existing research that suggests increased number inservice teaching years positively influences teacher self-efficacy (see Darling-Hammond, Chung, & Frelow, 2002; de la Torre Cruz & Casanova Arias, 2007; Heneman et al., 2006; Hoy & Woolfolk, 1993; Riggs & Enochs, 1990). Additionally, this research suggests collaborative partnerships with parents and other teachers that inform and support teacher work are empowering factors in participants’ view of social justice teacher leadership. This finding also supports existing research that suggests teachers feel more efficacious in environments where they feel supported (Lee et al., 1991; Puchner & Taylor, 2006; Ross, 1995).

Scholars suggest empowered individuals create capacities for change instead of relying on dominant, powerful sources for help (Bandura, 1977; Rappaport, 1981). Additionally, Zeichner (1996) characterizes effective teachers as empowered individuals who produce knowledge by using accurate, comprehensive, and culturally relevant
scholarship. Data from this study support these notions of teacher empowerment as participants cited the use of up-to-date research and technologies as empowering in their work as social justice teacher leaders. For example, Paula, a preservice special education teacher, views her knowledge of current research-supported pedagogy and efforts to share that knowledge with veteran teachers who may be “stuck” in their outdated practices as both empowering in her role as a teacher leader and impactful to school culture.

Findings regarding teacher empowerment and related self-efficacy in the current study support existing research that teacher self-efficacy relies on such factors as inservice teaching tenure and experience, collaborations with parents and colleagues, and use of scholarship in work. Still, however, these findings are important as they reflect preservice teachers’ beliefs regarding their abilities to behave as agents of change and are reliable indicators of the nature of how these teachers will find empowerment in their future work.

**Taking Action**

Findings from this study suggest participants held two seemingly contradictory views of taking action through leadership: following as an act of leadership and using voice to avoid silence. In conceptualizing action for social justice, these preservice teachers deviated slightly from the social justice teacher leadership framework and viewed their work as servant leaders (Greenleaf, 1977). Despite its widespread use across organizational contexts servant leadership lacks empirical investigation, thus little is known about this construct (Parris & Peachey, 2013; Russel & Stone, 2002). Attempts to develop frameworks for the theory have emerged one consistent theme: unlike more
traditional leadership models, which provide evidence of leadership action, servant leadership, hinges on leaders’ character and commitment to serve others (Parris & Peachey, 2013).

Participants recognize the importance of context in leadership and value supportive roles where they serve others whose abilities better meet group needs. This was evident as they regarded both the potential outcomes of critical self-reflection and taking action as teacher leaders through a servant leadership lens. Significantly, participants maintained their leadership positions when describing the silence, collaboration, and support they felt underpinned their servant roles, which indicates following and silence, when strategic, are active and meaningful contributions to leadership goals.

While participants suggested silence might be a strategic tool in leadership, they also viewed the avoidance of silence through voice as critical to taking action. Existing literature supports this more orthodox view of taking action for social justice as methods of resistance, rebellion, and restructuring (Brooks et al., 2007; Cochran-Smith, 1991; Furman, 2012; Goldfarb & Grinberg, 2002; Jansen, 2006). Furthermore, in addition to making their views heard and interjecting in contentious situations, teachers must actively disrupt conventional and oppressive ideals that serve to silence and make participation, voice, and even protest committed priorities in their work (Hackman, 2005; Shields, 2004). Participants expressed they felt compelled to participate in their schools and communities in critical ways. Adam framed action as extending himself outside of the school and involving the use of voice and work in such organizations as municipal
governance committees, while Eliza valued voicing concerns, ideas, and opinions surrounding change in faculty meetings.

These findings regarding the use of voice (in exchange for and contest of silence) as a mode of action supports existing work pertaining to the social justice teacher leadership framework. Findings regarding taking action as a teacher leader and in the name of social justice, however, also suggest the framework may need reshaping. While they may seem contradictory, related research findings that highlight leadership action as service point to learning opportunities regarding the strategic use of perceived passivity in social justice leadership work.

**Summary**

This section delineated an analysis of research findings using tenets of the social justice teacher leadership framework’s six tenets. I designed this project to explore how leaders identified among undergraduate preservice teachers conceptualize social justice teacher leadership. I found that while in large part this research supports existing literature, it also makes significant contributions to related areas of inquiry. Specifically, data from this research support potential theoretical expansions of critical pedagogy, transformative learning, and the nature of taking action as a social justice teacher leader.

First, analysis reveals a current understanding of critical pedagogy may become more complete with the consideration of intentional student norming as a method of empowerment. Further, results suggest existing conceptualizations of transformative learning are absent the consideration that critical self-reflection may lead to leadership through more passive roles focused on service. Current notions of critical self-reflection...
move leaders to act on information retrieved, however, findings suggest when leaders consider such information in context they may be moved to follow. Further, critical dialogue, another tool in transformative learning, is largely theorized as the careful receipt of information. Current research findings expand this mechanism to include articulate communication and the peaceful management of disagreement and compromise.

This research also exposes a gap regarding participants’ value in and/or expression of democratic learning environments as a tool in teachers’ student-centeredness. Finally, this research contributes to knowledge about taking action through the social justice leadership lens. Findings revisit the notion of leading by following and place social justice teacher leaders in subservient roles where their support of others characterizes their leadership. This particular finding highlights an opportunity for investigation into servant leadership as a mode of action in social justice teacher leadership.

The following section considers this study’s contributions to scholarship on social justice teacher leadership and outlines recommendations on how those in power to change existing structures of educational leadership might use findings to address social justice problems in education. Findings from this work suggest a new approach to the social justice work of educators is needed - one that considers leadership context in terms of style and motivation - which is discussed. I also offer suggestions for future inquiry into teacher leadership for social justice in the following and final chapter of this dissertation.
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this study was to investigate how a set of preservice teachers identified as leaders by administrators in their teacher education program conceptualize social justice teacher leadership. Personal interviews with five teacher education students served as qualitative data in this collective case study. This design is in line with research on social justice leadership (Marshall et al., 2010), which lacks objective models, is continuously critiqued and reconstructed to fit shifting needs, and difficult to grasp (Bogotch, 2002; Brooks et al., 2007). Because of the highly contextual nature of social justice work, existing social justice leadership frameworks are abstract in nature and offer broad standards regarding such influences as the nature of leadership power, leader-follower relationships, networks with parents and other stakeholders in student education, and research-based classroom practice (see Theoharis, 2007 and Webb et al., 2004). Further, a case study approach is appropriate in this type of inquiry as it employs variant purposes, methods, conceptual frames, and extracts different understandings of social justice leadership in findings (Furman, 2012).

During the data collection phase, I conducted two interviews with each of five participants from September 2013 to November 2013. I then transcribed and analyzed findings to answer the following research question: How do undergraduate preservice teacher leaders conceptualize social justice teacher leadership? Next, I reviewed data obtained from the ten total interviews to expose how participants framed social justice teacher leadership as defined in Chapter Two. Through data collection and sorting phases, participant profiles emerged and I distinguished each from the others, as their
strengths aligned with themes of the social justice teacher leadership framework.

Ultimately, I analyzed data to strengthen the social justice teacher leadership framework I initially built using existing research in overlapping areas of inquiry. Findings and conclusions from the study were discussed in Chapter Four.

After completing my dissertation, a new dimension to the study emerged. Through reflexivity that is inherent to the qualitative research process, I confronted an issue with my initial approach. Scholars insist social justice is a construct dependent upon and inseparable from the leadership context (Bogotch, 2002; Brooks et al., 2007; Furman, 2012; Marshall et al., 2010) and, in educational leadership, practitioners should be careful to avoid treating its practice as tasks to check off a list (Theoharis, 2007). However, despite its contextual nature frameworks do not account for such nuances in social justice leadership. For example, although Theoharis (2007) warns against treating social justice leadership as a checklist of activities, he also offers two lists deciphering social justice leaders from good leaders. This one-dimensional approach to social justice work in education is common and is also used by Webb et al. (2004) who distinguish between transactional, transformational, and critical conceptions of teacher leadership with lists of teacher qualities.

While these models and those like them provide insight into the potential nature of social justice, the current project brought to light their shortcomings. For this study, I developed a one-dimensional framework that mimicked existing models and delineated qualities and capacities a social justice teacher leader should possess. Through investigating how participants conceptualized social justice teacher leadership, however,
I never quite reached a level of data saturation I was fully comfortable with and assumed additional participants in a future study might help me find more confidence in my results. Through the reflexive process and with the encouragement of my dissertation committee I later revisited my framework, which was the center of my study, and realized my concern over data saturation may have been misplaced and such confidence may actually be impossible when inquiring into social justice teacher leadership. Rather, it became apparent a dynamic model that captured the contextual nature of social justice teacher leadership is needed to frame such work. As mentioned, this reflexive awareness came after completion of this study and, thus, its data cannot fully inform this new model. Nonetheless, this dissertation laid groundwork for an evolved social justice teacher leadership model that attempts to capture the nuances of context, including the leader and his/her work. Participants held clear leadership approaches, represented by the nicknames attributed to each case, and consistently referenced motivations to act as social justice teacher leaders. Currently, this model is in theoretical stages and future inquiry into its practicability is needed before it becomes a tool in inquiry and practice. In the following section, I explain this Evolved Social Justice Teacher Leadership Model and how data from this dissertation inspired it.

The Evolved Social Justice Teacher Leadership Model

The social justice teacher leadership model addresses the critical social justice leadership factor of context using two continual measures: leadership approach and motivation. In this model, social justice teacher leadership is defined as intentional leadership action by a teacher that considers personal and group identity as it seeks to
create social, economic, and political equity and to empower all individuals to improve the quality of their lives. Leadership in this construct can be formal or informal, which distinguishes it from traditional notions of leadership that reserve it for those in positional authority; thus, any teacher can act as a social justice teacher leader. The two axes in this model, leadership approach and motivation, represent the context of the leadership work this model is being used to assess. The grid quadrants represent leadership profiles under which users fall, given work context, and the center area represents the social justice teacher leadership profile, which emerges given mixed contextual factors.

In using this model, teacher leaders should honestly and critically reflect on themselves in relation to their leadership work to identify their profile and opportunities for social justice teacher leadership. Such open reflection is fundamental to the utility of this model as it allows the user to understand their leadership relative to work context as fluid and negotiable. Ideally, leadership and motivations intersect such that social justice teacher leadership is primed and this can only happen if users are objective about the influences on their work and desire to act as social justice teacher leaders.

First, in assessing the context of the work, the user assesses their leadership approach and places themselves along a continuum between authoritarian and collaborative extremes on the X axis. Next, the teacher leader determines their source of motivation to act in the interest of social justice for the work and determines where they lie along a continuum between external and internal on the Y axis. The leader then cross references these context measures to determine their leadership profile used to approach the social justice work. If they choose to change their work approach, they can take a
variety of actions that move them toward the middle of the grid, where social justice
teacher leadership lies. It is important to note, however, that affecting motivational
context will likely require significant investment and, under some circumstances, may not
be feasible to influence, which further supports the need to openly reflect on oneself in
relation to their environment before using the model. Below, a visual representation of
the Social Justice Teacher Leadership Model is offered, followed by a detailed outline of
its components (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. The Social Justice Teacher Leadership Model
Leadership Approach Continuum: Authoritarian to Collaborative

The social justice teacher leadership model includes a leadership approach continuum used to determine how users manage relevant tasks involving social justice issues. The authoritarian leadership approach involves high demands from the leader as well as compliance from followers (Dinham, 2007). Model users who identify with this leadership style have a traditional conception of leadership and focus on procedures and policies rather than people. Dinman (2007) suggests coercion through control becomes a factor in followers’ compliance as the sanctions, rules, and punishments associated with authoritarian leadership motivates them to act favorably. Further, the expectations of an authoritarian leader may be reinforced by extrinsic mechanisms (e.g., policies, procedures, and culture) and flexibility and compassion may be exchanged for control, order, and consistency.

The collaborative approach involves collegiality among teachers (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Teacher collaboration refers to the “professional collaborative and cooperative practices and activities” performed to achieve shared goals (Ning, Lee, & Lee, 2015, p. 3). Collaboration involves collective learning and application, which requires teachers to put student learning and outcomes first by convening on the development of best practices and professional development in their support (Hord, 1997). The collaborative leadership approach places value on others’ input and favors consensus building over direction and authority (Dinham, 2007) and teachers who promote such collaboration in their schools and around social justice issues help to create
a culture centered on shared power, which ultimately influences student experiences and outcomes.

Social justice educational leadership involves collaborative environments where professional development is designed and student success is found through cooperation (Theoharis, 2007). However, while a collaborative school culture is necessary, it is insufficient in encouraging teacher leadership (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). The nature of social justice teacher leadership is complex, involving more than participation in cooperative work. This is based on Smylie’s (2002) findings that show how teacher relationships flourish with openness and collegiality as long as they are considered equals. However, among teacher leaders who operate on a hierarchy, collegiality and collaboration is not a relationship norm. In their review of 20 years of teacher leadership scholarship, York-Barr and Duke (2004) consistently found teacher leaders primarily influence their colleagues by facilitating collaborative (and trusting) relationships. Thus, in creating such a work climate, leaders must find balance along the continuum between authoritative and collaborative leadership.

Dinham (2007) suggests *authoritative leaders* fall between the extremes of authoritarian and a sort of collaborative leader (what he calls a permissive leader). These authoritative leaders maintain balance of the two extremes as they facilitate collaborative environments, by being responsive to and supportive of colleagues, and are demanding, a characteristic of authoritarian leadership (Dinham, 2007). Model users who share attributes of authoritarian and collaborative leadership (e.g., authoritative leaders) are inclusive, to a degree, as they are aware of individual and group qualities and work to
meet those needs. They listen and work collaboratively to build both commitment and compromise. Their expectations of others are clear and they are assertive. Additionally, those who lie along the center of X continuum have respect for rules and sanctions, without overly relying on them. They know when to consult others and when to be independently decisive. While most model users will not equally share attributes of both leadership approaches, careful assessment of work orientation should determine the degree to which they favor authoritarian or collaborative leadership as they place themselves along the continuum. Ultimately, authoritative teacher leaders come in all varieties and the exact nature of their leadership cannot be described as precisely as authoritarian and collaborative leaders.

**Dissertation data and the leadership approach.** Data from this study informed the leadership approach dimension of the Evolved Social Justice Teacher Leadership Model as participants’ descriptions of social justice teacher leadership consistently related to modes of leadership orientation. Within-case data suggests each participant falls along a leadership approach continuum that defines their general views on the role of a teacher leader. For example, Adam favored leadership from an authoritarian approach. Good leadership, to Adam, is objective and “unemotional”. While he recognized the informality of certain types of leadership, he primarily characterized teacher leaders as holding positional roles of authority as department chairs, coaches, and club sponsors and focused his description of social justice teacher leadership on using discipline to norm students to the expectations of society. As a future classroom leader, he felt entitled to the respect associated with his position and spoke of how to maintain...
that respect through rules and regulations that were often based in followers’ (i.e., students’) fears. Adam’s respect for positional authority and rules as well as use of sanctions to coerce others to act favorably are characteristic of authoritarian leaders.

On the other hand, Wendy views leadership collaboratively. She consistently described teacher leadership as being helpful to others, exercising the communicative learning aspect of critical discourse to authentically listen to and understand others’ perspectives and needs (Mezirow, 2003) and, subsequently, acting to establish consensus with the group. She viewed herself as someone who would partner with colleagues as an equal contributor, but her ability to act with authority was topically contextual (e.g., as a near graduate she may be able to advise tenured teachers on classroom technology integration). Even when Wendy felt confident in her authority she was interested in group members’ buy-in for that authority to be legitimated. This collaborative approach to teacher leadership was a theme salient throughout Wendy’s case data.

The three other study participants approached social justice leadership somewhere between these authoritarian and collaborative approaches – as authoritative leaders. Paula adopted a collaborative approach, but maintained some qualities in the authoritarian style, which influenced her authoritative leadership method. She felt confident in her informal authority as a new teacher armed with knowledge of research-based practice in her field of special education, but found that authority as a tool in partnerships with teachers and parents. She felt this informal authority as well as her initiative to act and communicate with others, including school administrators, would earn her the respect of others. Paula was passionate in developing a school and
classroom culture that supported special education students through partnerships with mainstream education teachers and spending time with students’ families outside of the school. Ultimately, Paula’s collaborative approach to teacher leadership was founded in her ability to lead others through personal and professional qualities, which characterizes her authoritative leadership approach.

Lana also balanced an authoritarian and collaborative leadership approaches, however, the nature of her authoritative leadership differed significantly from Paula’s. Lana was interested in using her authority as a classroom leader to legitimate the perspectives of her students. She believed in a democratic classroom environment, where students’ identities were reflected in the course curriculum she designed and critical discussions she facilitated. She felt confident in gaining the respect of students, parents, teachers, and administrators through her sensitivity to individual and group qualities and needs as well as her keen communication skills. She holds high standards for herself and her students and consistently references her faith as providing guidance and a sense of order in her work. Lana’s balance of maintaining authority with engaging a justice-based orientation to her work, that requires the inclusion of a diversity of interests, positions her as an authoritative type of teacher leader.

Similarly, Eliza’s approach to teacher leadership coupled her classroom authority with conceptions of inclusion. In her case, leadership is warm to others and responsive, a collaborative quality, while maintaining respect for order, an authoritarian quality. For example, she views the censorship issue she anticipates addressing in her art classroom as the teacher leader’s responsibility to facilitate critical dialogues with students and
encourage self-expression and an inclusive culture while also maintaining respect for the rules and expectations of the school community, which may be more conservative than her classroom’s. While she may not agree with potential censorships, she plans to balance incidents by using her classroom community as a forum for student expression and dialogue where control and sanctions are exchanged for discretion and reason. This example of Eliza’s authoritative leadership style illustrates how a rule and order-based, authoritarian approach can complimented a responsive, collaborative method when the teacher leader is conscious of how their goals align with work context.

Data from this dissertation suggest there is something significant about leadership approaches that define how a teacher might engage social justice in their work. More so than other leadership factors (e.g., the nature of power, age and tenure of group members, experience as a teacher), one’s leadership style consistently emerged as influencing participants’ orientation toward social justice. While each case exemplifies a unique approach to teacher leadership, data suggest those approaches fall along a continuum and, when authoritarian and collaborative leadership methods are present, there are innumerable approaches to authoritative leadership. Despite the variations of authoritarian leadership, it is apparent that collaborative leaders cannot effectively lead without authority and authoritarian leaders cannot do so without some sort of group consensus and these data helped to inform the Evolved Social Justice Teacher Leadership Model.
Motivation Continuum: External to Internal

Along the Y axis, the social justice teacher leadership model includes a motivation continuum used to determine users’ inspiration and support for relevant work. External motivations are systems-based (instead of person-based) and include school and district policies, procedures, and culture that the teacher had minimal or no influence in designing. They also include positive (i.e., encouraging) and negative (i.e., discouraging) sanctions systems directly or indirectly related to the work in question. Such motivations influence the teacher leader to behave in accordance with an externally defined, formal or informal structure. An example of a positive sanction that encourages social justice work includes a free day off for teachers who complete all home visits in the first month of school. The free day off incentive acts as an extrinsic motivator to meet the desired benchmark, which was set by policy makers. A model user who finds themselves working in a social justice-oriented school context may find a number of formal policies that encourage teacher-parent and community engagement and partnership imbedded into the system. Ultimately, they behave in desirable ways, but without internal motivations to couple such external influences, the teacher leader approaches their work with a deficit.

Internal motivations include personal perspectives and experiences that shape the model user’s views on and approach to social justice work. Examples of such factors include personal experiences with diversity, critical self-reflection and consciousness, and awareness of own racial and cultural identities, all of which are detailed in Chapter Two under Acceptance of Social Justice Leadership Orientations. Influential experiences
include any significant events that impact an individual’s perspectives. Additionally, internal motivations include views on how society operates socially, economically, and politically, beliefs and knowledge about historical and current events, and personal values. When users recognize the inequity inherent to and/or inequality that manifests in systems and desire to address those through their teacher work, internal motivations become a factor in acting in favor of social justice. The teacher self-efficacy factor, also detailed in Chapter Two, is significant to the Y axis and this model and involves beliefs about one’s ability to complete a task (Bandura, 1977). This is significant to internal motivation because teacher leaders who feel confident to act as social justice agents influence levels of personal effort exerted in their work, persistence when facing obstacles, resilience when confronted with failure, and stress resulting from challenging situations. Taken together, these personal perspectives and experiences create an internal motivation that shapes the user’s conviction to act in favor of social justice.

Cochran-Smith (1995) argues waiting to be told how to perform tasks associated with social justice education is insufficient and teachers must be self-motivated to critically engage their work using their own intelligences and considering contexts. For a context where social justice teacher leadership can grow, passionate, intrinsically motivated leadership must be coupled with a formal and informal policies and procedures centered on achieving social justice. Teacher leaders who feel convicted to create social, economic, and political equity and empower individuals to improve the quality of their lives through their work may find themselves lacking support from school or community culture and policies that enable and encourage such work. They may feel as though they
are figuratively swimming upstream as the system within which they operate works against them and exhaustion and cynicism may result. On the other hand, teacher leaders who are motivated by policies and culture to act in the interest of social justice and lack the intrinsic drive to critique, resist, restructure existing systems are ill-equipped to fully engage their work. As social justice is contextually defined, conscious teacher leaders are necessary to achieve the intended outcomes of social justice policies and culture and, thus, those who find balance between internal and external motivations to act in the interest of social justice are best equipped for social justice teacher leadership.

**Dissertation data and motivation.** Just as study data informed the leadership approach dimension of the Evolved Social Justice Teacher Leadership Model, it also pointed to the need for a motivation dimension. Within-case data suggest external, internal, or a combination of both influences are sources of individuals’ motivation to work in the interest of social justice. External motivations generally include system-based forces outside the individual that influence work behavior (e.g., school policies, community culture, and others’ requests) while internal motivations include individual-based forces that influence work behavior (e.g., personal identity awareness, witness of or experience with discrimination, and concepts of social capital). Mixed motivations may correlate on the same social justice issue (e.g., experiences and perspectives supportive of queer culture coupled with mandatory Safe Spaces training as part of teacher professional development) or remain independent regarding different social justice issues (e.g., strong feelings regarding White Privilege and a district’s mainstream integrative approach to special education).
This study’s design (e.g., research questions and participants’ preservice teacher status) limited what can be known about the motivational dimension of the Evolved Social Justice Teacher Leadership Model. Because participants had limited, if any, professional teaching experience, external influences were largely hypothetical and described as those participants would positively influence or help design (usually in the form of school culture). Further, external motivations were rarely described as existing cultures and structures supportive of social justice teacher leadership, as they are in the Evolved Social Justice Teacher Leadership Model, because this project was not designed to gather such data. Instead, participants described external forces that might pose challenges to their social justice work.

While such data does not directly inform the new model, it suggests external forces are critical in the work of a social justice teacher leader and participants were keenly aware of this. For example, Paula anticipates administrative paperwork will steal valuable time from her inherently social justice-based work as a special educator. While she views this as a negative factor, this data suggests awareness of the external forces impacting one’s social justice teacher leadership work is critical to framing that work. Participants also suggest other external factors, such as school and community culture, informal requests from and expectations of powerful group members, and district-level plans and policies, will influence the nature of their social justice teacher leadership work. This salient finding in existing data suggests external motivations are an important factor in the social justice work of teacher leaders.
On the other hand, internal motivations for social justice work were cited throughout case data as participants consistently drew upon personal experiences and worldviews as they explained the nature of social justice in schools. For example, Wendy, Lana, and Eliza cite events involving racial bigotry as transformational experiences that shaped their worldviews, which also related to the type of critical pedagogy they plan to engage in their future classrooms. Wendy’s awareness of the tense racial dynamics of peer relationships through her junior and high school years was significant in shaping her culturally inclusive approach to teaching. Additionally, Wendy looks forward to using texts in her English classroom that push students to grapple with a variety of oppression that exist in society. Lana’s personal experiences with racial bigotry, coupled with strong views regarding the inherent unequal nature of social systems, inform the manner she plans to approach her social studies teaching. She consistently references life experiences, ideologies passed through family culture, and a personal relationship with a higher power when describing her critical approach to teacher leadership, social justice, and social studies education, which she views as inextricably linked.

Eliza also cites personal awareness and experiences in a racially (and socioeconomically) segregated school system. She details events as they relate to her schooling experiences – socially and academically – and how they shaped her realizations of social inequity, her own privileges, and individual-level discrimination. The critical discourses about related issues she engaged in with her high school teachers shaped her desire and approach to teaching. Eliza anticipates being challenged by school and
community cultures much like the ones that challenged her as a student and uses that internal awareness as a motivator in creating a classroom environment based in critical pedagogy. In large part, data from this study illustrate the internal motivations that perpetuate social justice teacher leadership. As stated, while its design limits how the motivation dimension of the Evolved Social Justice Teacher Leadership Model can currently be described, data consistently point to the importance of external and internal motivations in influencing the nature of teacher leaders’ work.

Further, data suggest motivational influences can be convoluted and cyclical, as internal motivations that inspire social justice work can also be the source of external sources of social justice work. For example, a teacher leader with strong internal motivation to behave as a social justice teacher leader may dedicate their time and energy to designing and championing a school breakfast program to feed low income students, an external force in social justice work. The opposite may be true as well when considering the influence one’s work culture can have on their perspectives. For example, the breakfast program may then act as an external motivation for teachers to maintain personal awareness of students’ health and wellbeing beyond academics, which points to a mixed motivational source. Or, a school culture that embraces students’ ethnic diversities may encourage social consciousness among teachers that reinforces the development of unrelated programs, such as the breakfast program. This points to independent motivational sources. Case study data illustrate this relationship as participants consistently discuss how they hope to influence school culture, an external force, in their teacher leadership work. Thus, awareness of internal and external
motivational forces may be critical, as knowledge of these dynamics and their correlative nature may strengthen their impact on social justice work.

Leadership approach and motivation are intended to determine a teacher leader’s orientation toward social justice work. Once a model user has determined their placement along the two axes, they must then cross reference their approach and motivation to determine their leadership style and opportunities for advancement. The five leadership orientations of the Evolved Social Justice Teacher Leadership Model are detailed below. It is important for users to understand each profile provides a general leadership style framework and teacher leaders using this model may identify strongly with some characteristics of their profile and not at all with others. The utility of this model is founded in the open, critical self-reflection users must engage to assess their leadership approach and motivations as well as the contextually-defined actions they may take to advance toward Social Justice Teacher Leadership after one’s leadership style has been determined.

The Five Leadership Orientations

**Tasked Administrator.** The Tasked Administrator is the type of teacher leader who uses external motivations and an authoritarian approach to their social justice work. This leader relies on mechanisms imbedded into the system, such as traditional procedures and expectations, formal school policies, and supervisor expectations, to guide their work. They possess a strong sense of direction, established by external forces, which is notable to followers who are likely to respect them. They may speak and act with confidence and hold themselves and others to high standards. When the policies
and culture that guide a Tasked Administrator’s work are social justice-based and soundly designed, they are likely to be successful in achieving prescribed outcomes.

These administrators are “tasked” because they lack intrinsic interest and investment in their work and are driven by work outlined by external mechanisms. They may even couple their positional authority with systems-based sanctions to coerce followers to act favorably. They are often demanding of group members, providing directives, and desiring control. This type of leader may appear unemotional to followers who may respect, but do not necessarily trust their leadership. While their actions may result in socially just outcomes, a Tasked Administrator is likely credit themselves and the formal policies they adhered to for positive outcomes instead of group dynamics. Additionally, outcomes may not endure because collaboration and passion were lacking in their creation.

**Collegial Team Leader.** The Collegial Team Leader uses external motivations and a collaborative approach to leadership to find social justice in their work. This leader is aware of policies and culture and maintains focus on doing work as it is prescribed by others or through systems-based structures (e.g., policies and culture) while being responsive to colleagues’ ideas, perspectives, and feelings about the work. They work hard to establish a collaborative work environment and model that in their leadership style.

Though they may be well liked, others may not fully respect the Collegial Team Leader as they may appear to be too agreeable, are rarely assertive in their leadership, and fail to provide direction to followers. This type of leader strives to share power
throughout the group and contribute to group work instead of guiding it. They likely lack personal convictions regarding social justice issues at the base of their work, but work collegially with group members to build consensus and achieve outcomes prescribed by external systems of motivation. Because of the Collegial Team Leader’s weak group vision and guidance, some social justice impact of their work may be lost if empowered group members are apathetic about or offended with social justice aspect of their work and are able to influence shared projects.

**Motivated Director.** The Motivated Director couples an authoritarian approach with intrinsic motivations to act as a social justice teacher leader. This leader may be characterized by others for their critical consciousness or passion for social justice issues and their desire for group compliance. Additionally, they are known to hold group members to high standards designed to meet the objectives of their social justice-oriented work, which is prioritized over those they lead. This type of leader is likely to take their work personally and their role as an authority over others’ work seriously. They may have personal experiences with oppression, hold ideologies critical of existing power systems, be keenly aware of their own and others’ identities, and feel confident in achieving social justice outcomes through their work.

The Motivated Director uses procedures and sanctions to regulate group members and achieve the social justice they feel intrinsically motivated toward. They may feel their passion for and awareness of the social justice nature of their work justifies their commanding leadership style. Thus, they are “motivated” by internal sources (i.e., perspectives, experiences, efficacy) to “direct” others toward social justice in their work.
While this leadership profile may appeal to some, there is a risk for untapped potential as followers may feel stifled and resentful by their inability to contribute and the lack of opportunities to exercise their own leadership, given appropriate contexts.

Critical Collaborator. The Critical Collaborator is most likely to be confused with a Social Justice Teacher Leader as they use a collaborative leadership approach important in social justice education and maintain a consciousness of their and others’ identities and experiences that found their conviction to act in the interest of social justice. Like the Motivated Director, this leader may be known for their critical consciousness or focus on social justice, however, others’ contributions are the prime resources in achieving desired work outcomes instead of their own authority or tasks prescribed by external sources. This leader may have a social justice issue that moves them, but their work is often balanced by the input they seek from group members. They share power with others who may find the Critical Collaborator’s convictions infectious.

This teacher leader is likely to have influence on group members, but may find themselves struggling to finds formal support from the systems within which their work is imbedded. They may have to work diligently to create programs and policies that encourage social justice work. This intrinsically motivated group facilitator may lack followers’ obedience and respect because they are unlikely to couple their strong visions with high standards and demanding compliance. Those a Critical Collaborator leads may lack motivation to work for social justice as rules, procedures, and sanctions are likely missing from the leader’s professional toolkit. Thus, followers must also be highly
motivated to use the discretion awarded to them through the leader’s highly collaborative approach to achieve the potential of shared social justice work.

**Social Justice Teacher Leader.** The Social Justice Teacher Leader finds themselves in the middle region of both contextual continuums. They use a unique authoritative leadership approach, complimenting authoritarian with collaborative styles, and a critically intrinsic motivation coupled with a set of well-designed and diverse external mechanisms to engage their social justice work. The Social Justice Teacher Leader is likely an effective listener who seeks to understand individual and group qualities so they can facilitate collaboration and inspire commitment and compromise among group members. These leaders are trusted and respected by followers as they know when it is appropriate to consult group members and when to be independently decisive and clearly and assertively communicate expectations of others. They respect rules, but do not allow rules to guide their work.

This leader is constantly aware of their leadership style and motivating factors that influence their work and makes adjustments as needed. They are likely noted for the passion with which they approach their work, but also actively work to maintain their own critical consciousness by doing such things as engaging in critical self-reflection, connecting theory to practice, and continuously learning about topics relevant to their work. Perhaps most challenging to their work, Social Justice Teacher Leaders are active in designing and restructuring policies and culture that center on social justice while using their authority to creating consensus within their group about work objectives. Thus, such a leader must understand the needs of their social, political, and economic
context and work diligently as a leader to meet those needs, using and creating resources to do so.

These five leadership orientations are contextually relevant and teacher leaders using this model must seek to understand the many factors influencing their work if this model is to be useful. Each profile described offers a framework for understanding one’s orientation toward social justice work and model users must carefully assess their leadership context to develop plans to advance toward Social Justice Teacher Leadership. Each of the four quadrant profiles has positive and negative aspects, which should ideally encourage identifying teacher leaders to focus their time, energy, and other resources on outlined opportunities for improvement. Even Social Justice Teacher Leadership requires focused attention, arguably the most of the five styles, as those who identify must maintain constant awareness of and challenge their work dynamics and context and work diligently to maintain and execute their social justice agenda. The next section of this chapter addresses suggestions for future research and is followed by a brief summary.

**Suggestions for Future Research**

The social justice teacher leadership conceptual framework originally developed through this project is theoretically significant as it integrates overlapping, abstract notions of teacher leadership with those of educational leadership for social justice and addresses the capacity for teachers to behave as social justice leaders. However, through reflexive practice, it became apparent that further work was needed to strengthen this construct. While maintaining significance in the aforementioned areas, a new Social Justice Teacher Leadership Model evolved from this study’s investigation. Because this
inquiry was not designed with the evolved model in mind, data was insufficient in framing certain areas of the model, namely the motivation dimension.

Nonetheless, this new model improves upon exiting social justice leadership frameworks by accounting for leadership context and placing teacher leaders and their work at the foundation of its function. Scholars consistently implicate the importance of context (Bogotch, 2002; Brooks et al., 2007; Furman, 2012; Marshall et al., 2010) and caution against a one-dimensional approach (Theoharis, 2007) to social justice leadership, however, context has yet to be captured by the checklists currently offered in literature. The Evolved Social Justice Teacher Leadership Model developed through reflexivity offers a dynamic framework that summons user investment by placing the teacher leader at the center of model and tasks them with critical reflection on their work and its context.

Because data from the current study could not sufficiently inform the design of the new model, future inquiry into its practicability is necessary before it can become a tool in inquiry and practice. Study that strengthens the rationale supporting the model’s motivation dimension is needed to replace the insufficient data used in its current design. Such work should investigate teachers’ intrinsic motivations for pursuing social justice work as well as their views on the extrinsic influences on such work. School and district-level policies, group culture, community expectations, formal and informal leader styles may all be topics explored through interview questions. Ultimately, researchers should seek to understand factors influencing teacher leaders’ social justice work. Further, the unique perspectives of participants may be particularly important in such research.
considering the reinforcing nature of internal and external influences discussed earlier. The only way to understand potential relationships is to conduct well-designed research. Future inquiry should also serve to expound upon the five orientations of teacher leadership described in this work. Research should seek to more fully explain each profile along with their strengths and weaknesses. This kind of detailed explanation would allow model users to more fully understand their work as it relates to context as well as their opportunities for advancement. Further, illustrations in the form of case studies would be helpful in understanding the challenges each leader may face and possible methods in issue management.

Future empirical research should focus on inservice teacher leaders at various places in their careers. Investigating beginning, mid-career, and veteran teachers allows dynamics that were not considered in this study to influence scholarship. Inservice teachers have perspectives on external mechanisms and leadership approaches participants in this study were lacking. Further, investigations should sample teachers across their career span to understand the influence of tenure on the nature of teacher leadership and social justice. The same should be done for teachers from various preparation programs, subjects, backgrounds, and identities to understand how such factors might correlate with social justice teacher leadership and to best prepare teachers for such work.

Finally, this study calls for investigations into the relationships between teacher leaders at all stages in their careers and school administrators. Scholarship should focus on how formal leaders support or do not support the five leadership styles, so that we
may begin to understand how to reform school contexts in the interest of social justice
teacher leadership. Such research would also serve to further inform the Social Justice
Teacher Leadership Model. Future research mentioned here and investigations stemming
from these serve to develop a new strand of scholarship in social justice teacher
leadership and open possibilities in the social justice work of schools. The following
section concludes this project by providing a summary statement.

**Summary**

As the American educational system continues to develop focus on its role in
social justice, it must seriously consider the everyday work of teachers in creating
educational and life opportunities for their students (see Cochran-Smith, 1991; Canestrari
& Marlowe, 2005; Fullan, 1999; Moll & Arnot-Hopfper, 2005; Nieto, 2006; Souto-
Manning, 2011; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Those who believe in the social equalizing
function of education must empower teachers, beginning in their preservice years, to lead
as agents of change in their respective teaching contexts (see Apple, 1989; Bercaw &
Stooksberry, 2004; Moll & Arnot-Hopfper, 2005). In doing so, we must rely on emerging
research to inform what and how reform will affect a meaningful shift in frameworks of
educational leadership for social justice, which are currently all but absent the
perspectives and experiences of teachers. Furthermore, scholars must continue to
develop constructs - like the original and evolved frameworks developed through this
work - that honor the enduring contributions of teacher leaders in social justice.
REFERENCES


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APPENDIX A

Interview 1

Introduction

I want to thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. To begin, I have to address a few things before the interview begins. I have a consent form that needs to be signed that indicates that you are willfully participating in this study and agree to the interview being recorded. If at any time you would like to stop the interview or need a break just let me know. Also, I have a small thank you gift for participation that totals 10 dollars. For each interview you complete, you will receive a five dollar gift card. I anticipate the interview to last anywhere between 60 to 90 minutes. If you agree to the terms I just described I’ll have you sign right here. One copy of the form is for your records.

In the future, I might want to continue this project and check in with you to see how things are going. I’m not asking for any kind of a commitment right now, just reliable contact information I might be able to use in the future if I decide to further this project. Please write down your first and last name and two methods of contact you prefer on the consent form.

Now, I would like to give you an overview of what to expect in this interview. I am interviewing you as a part of my dissertation project that is interested in the views of students like you, those who are preparing to be future teachers.

I want to encourage you to relax and feel free to talk about anything that comes to mind. Please know that I’m not looking for any responses in particular, I’m just curious to know what you have to say.

Questions

Background

1. Can you tell me a little bit about your background?
   a. Demographics; hometown; family; etc.
2. Can you tell me about your schooling experiences before attending Mizzou?
3. What is your certification area and grade level of interest?
a. What is it about this area that made you want to pursue it?

4. Why did you choose teaching as a career option?

**Social Perspectives**

1. What is the purpose of schooling?
2. What role do schools play in society?
   a. How do teachers support this role
3. Many people believe schools should function to prepare young people for society the way it is. Others argue that schools ought to transform society to question and dismantle the status quo. What do you think?
   a. Given your position, how will this play out in your everyday practices as a teacher?
4. What is *social justice*, in your opinion?
   a. What comes to mind?
   b. Where have you heard the term before?
5. Should schools promote social justice? Why? How?
   a. What role might everyday teachers play in pursuing social justice?

**Leadership Perspectives**

1. How do you define leadership?
2. What kinds of leadership experiences have you had?
3. You were asked to participate in this study because program administrators identified you as a leader among your classmates. Describe why others might view you as a leader now. Qualities? Activities?
   a. Which of these do you think others would identify as “the leader in you”?
4. Some argue that leaders “have it in them” and find themselves in leadership roles in various contexts, while others argue leaders develop and emerge through experience. What do you think?
   a. This is going to require some self-reflection and maybe even some boasting. Which perspective applies to you? Why?
5. Some believe teachers can be leaders in their schools and communities. How might a teacher act as a leader in a school context? Community?
6. As a new teacher, what might be the rewards of behaving as leader?
7. As a new teacher, what might be some barriers to behaving as a leader?
a. Where might new teacher leaders draw motivations to persevere, despite these barriers?

_Hypothetical Scenario: To Lead or Not To Lead_

1. Say your school is facing a decision of whether or not to…
   a. **High School**: Develop a vocational program for students who might not be best served through traditional educational courses…
   b. **Middle School**: Hire a Spanish-speaking ESL teacher to accommodate the growing Hispanic immigrant population.
   c. **Elementary School**: Start tracking students in courses based on their achievement levels in order to streamline instruction
      i. What position would you take on this issue?
      ii. What might you do about it?
      iii. Who might you rally to do it?
Introduction

Thank you for meeting with me again today. As you know today’s interview concludes our meetings. At the end of this interview I will take some time to debrief with you. Today we are going to explore some of your perspectives on teaching and we are going to end with a hypothetical scenario. I’m going to read you a story and then ask you questions about it. Let’s go ahead and get started.

Questions

Teaching Perspectives

1. What is the difference between a teacher and a teacher leader?
2. Describe the leadership in your ideal school setting?
3. Fast forward to your first year or two of teaching. How might you see yourself leading? Qualities? Activities?
4. How might you see yourself continuing to lead and grow as a veteran teacher, long into your professional experience as a teacher? Qualities? Activities?

Hypothetical Scenario: Grandma Milton, the Disciplinarian

Fast forward about five years. You are in your second year of teaching at Milton Heights and are learning and growing from your mistakes as a first year teacher. You’ve learned that as a professional educator at Milton Heights you are expected to adhere to certain codes of conduct –both formal and informal. By now you have relationships with administrators, staff, and other teachers and have found where you fit in. You would like to build a long term career at Milton Heights and keep good pedagogy and quality relationships at the foundation of your work.

Last year you developed a professional friendship with Mrs. Strack, a science teacher whose room is two doors down from yours. Mrs. Strack has been at Milton Heights for over 30 years and is known, jokingly, by students as Grandma Milton. She and her
family are well known in the small community as they own a local hardware store that has been around longer than Mrs. Strack has been alive. Over time you begin to realize Mrs. Strack has a unique reputation. In your earliest days at Milton Heights a fellow teacher commended Mrs. Strack’s no-nonsense approach to “the rowdy ones”. Since then, students, faculty, and staff alike have described her similarly and you often find students who have misbehaved in her class sitting in the hallway outside of her classroom.

One day, as you stand in the hallway watching traffic and chatting with students between periods Camille, one of your brightest students, approaches you in tears. Camille confides in you that she feels Mrs. Strack has been picking on her. Mrs. Strack has been taking points off her homework for things no one else gets deducted points for. She even marked an entire multiple point question wrong on her last test that she had correctly answered. Camille tells you she has been frustrated for some time, but with today’s incident she had had enough. Mrs. Strack told the class to wear school colors, which are black and orange, today for extra credit on their homework. Camille had fun with the assignment and wore a black and orange striped shirt. Mrs. Strack refused to give Camille extra credit, told her the assignment was to wear black or orange, and had embarrassed Camille in front of her friends and classmates. You take some time to comfort Camille as you think about what could be going on here. Suddenly you see a pattern: Those “rowdy ones” that teacher was talking about, the students sitting in the hallway outside of her class, and Camille are all Black.

1. What do you think is the issue here?
2. What would you do to address the issue?
3. How confident are you that your actions would solve this problem with Mrs. Strack?
4. How might such an issue where teachers mistreat a group of students based on their personal identities have long term effects on those students?
   a. How might such mistreatment create large social trends?
5. How could this problem have persisted at Milton Heights?
   a. Why is Mrs. Strack’s presence in the school and community important in this case?
6. As a new teacher, what are your professional concerns with this issue?
7. How have your education and experiences in your teacher education program prepared you to deal with such an issue?
Social Justice Teacher Leadership

1. Now that we’ve discussed this scenario, what is your definition of social justice teacher leadership?
   a. What qualities does such a leader possess?
   b. What types of actions and activities are they concerned with?

2. How might social justice teacher leadership be different than traditional leadership?

3. How might a social justice teacher leader engage with:
   a. students?
   b. colleagues and administrators?
   c. parents?
   d. community?

4. How confident are you with your ability to enact social justice teacher leadership in each of the aforementioned communities?
   a. What concerns do you have regarding your interaction with each community?
   b. How might your teacher education program address your concerns?

5. How confident are you that you can motivate improvements in your students’ learning and schooling experiences?
   a. What concerns do you have?

6. How confident are you that you can influence and motivate your colleagues and administrators to act in the interest of social justice issues?
   a. What concerns do you have?

7. How confident are you that you will be able to develop meaningful relationships with parents that will inform how you behave as a teacher?
   a. What concerns do you have?

8. How confident are you that your actions along with your students’, colleagues and administrators’, and parents’ actions will create change in the community in the interest of social justice issues?
   a. What concerns do you have?

9. What skills and/or qualities do you have to behave as a social justice teacher leader?
10. What skills and/or qualities do you need to behave as a social justice teacher leader

Conclusion

This concludes our interview. Here is my card and a meager thank you for your time and participation in this study. It simply would not be possible without you. I wanted to remind you that last time we talked about me potentially doing a follow up study in the future. I’m curious to know how the first year or two of your teaching works out. Please keep my card and remember me, because if all goes well I will be in contact with you using the information you gave me in our first meeting. Also, if you are interested in learning how this study turns out, please feel free to contact me and I’ll be happy to keep you updated.
VITA

Urme Ali was born the middle child to Bangladeshi immigrants in South Dakota. She attended schools in Lawrence, Kansas before moving to Cape Girardeau, Missouri, in 1995 where she earned her high school diploma in 2002. Urme attended Southeast Missouri State University for her undergraduate degree and earned a Bachelors of Science in Public Relations in 2006. From there, she moved to Columbia, Missouri to attend graduate school at the University of Missouri and earned her Masters in Public Affairs in 2009. She plans to graduate with her Ph.D. in Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis from the University of Missouri in May 2015.