THE IMPACT OF ACCOUNTABILITY BASED REFORM ON SOCIAL JUSTICE

EDUCATION: A CASE STUDY OF TWO NEW YORK CITY TEACHERS

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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In an era increasingly dominated by a shift towards standardization and high

stakes testing in education, accountability based reforms (ABR) that are aimed at

improving outcomes for students who have been historically marginalized may actually

be forcing teachers to abandon culturally relevant practices that have long been thought

to be an important way to equalize educational experiences and empower these very same

students. While both social justice education and ABR advocate improving education for

minority students, I explored whether there was additional pressure placed on social

justice educators by their attempt to navigate ABR while maintaining their identities and

core beliefs as social justice educators. Despite early findings that ABR limits the

curriculum and focuses skills-based instruction on testing questions(see, for example,

Finnegan, 2007; Rowan, 1996; Hamilton, Steecher, & Yuan, 2008; Firestone,

Mayrowetz, & Fairman, 1998), standardized testing and ABR are a reality that educators

must address, and social justice educators must find ways to do so while holding all

students to high standards, developing critical consciousness in their students, and

creating a curriculum that represents diverse knowledge and ways of knowing (Feger, 2006; Brown, 2003; Sheets, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1995).

This phenomenological case study of two teachers, one in a traditional public school and one in a charter school, examined the ways that their discourses around their social justice identities were shaped by both the policy and school. Analysis of these discourses using Gee's (2011) tool demonstrated that the context in which the teacher worked, the amount of support and collaborative opportunities available, and the personal educational and racial history of the teacher all influenced the figured worlds that they developed surrounding social justice and ABR. Both teachers enacted figured worlds that represented an amalgamation of political and social goods valued by ABR and SJE. Ultimately, the discourses of these two teachers pointed to a need for less emphasis on standardized test data in evaluating teacher and student growth, more opportunities for collaboration, and greater attention in research to the ways that social justice educators can use ABR policies to support the development of social justice oriented classroom curriculum.

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INTRODUCTION

In this study, I looked at the ways that two teachers who consciously self-identified as social justice educators but who were working in school environments that were shaped in varying degrees by accountability based reforms (ABR) used discourses that build significance, shape identities, distribute political goods, and enact figured worlds (Gee, 2011) that reflected both their social justice identity and the demands of ABR. Specifically, these two teachers worked in New York City but in different environments, particularly with regard to ABR: Jordan worked in a traditional public school while Nicole worked in a charter school. This study focused on the ways that their identities and context influenced their discourses surrounding social justice education (SJE) as well as ABR. Ultimately, this study found that the teachers' social justice identities were shaped by their personal identities and background, that context and school environment strongly impacted the teachers' social justice identity, and that teachers could successfully align their social justice identity with the demands of ABR in a way that promoted positive educational outcomes for all students.

CHAPTER 1

COMPETING IDEOLOGIES: HOW TEACHERS MAKE SENSE OF THE

SOCIAL JUSTICE AND FEDERAL APPROACHES TO THE EDUCATION OF

HISTORICALLY MARGINALIZED STUDENTS

In an era increasingly dominated by a shift towards standardization and high stakes testing in education, teacher accountability measures that are aimed at improving outcomes for students who have been historically marginalized by race, class, and other social factors may actually be discouraging teachers from pursuing social justice practices in education. These practices have long been thought by educators to be an important way to equalize educational experiences and empower these very same students. Students from historically marginalized racial and ethnic groups have traditionally underperformed in comparison to their white, middle-class peers. Their perspectives have been left out of mainstream politics and policies, as, "The privileged are usually not inclined to protect and further the interests of the oppressed...partly because to some degree their privilege depends on the continued oppression of others" (Young, 2003, p. 227). This includes low-income students and, primarily, students of African and Latino descent. However, the pressures placed on teachers by the mismatch between their personal ideologies, policies, and hegemonic discourses that are ingrained in society may be creating additional tension on classroom educators, specifically those aiming to improve educational outcomes for historically marginalized students. With this, there is an understanding that teachers' beliefs and actions are guided by both conscious understandings and decisions as well as unconscious understandings of how the world works, which together shape their ideology around education.

While there is no consensus on the definition of social justice educators, I utilized Young's (1990) definition of social justice, which states that "where social group differences exist and some groups are privileged while others are oppressed, social justice requires explicitly acknowledging and attending to those group differences in order to undermine oppression" (p. 116). Thus, a social justice educator is one who recognizes this oppression and works within the classroom and the larger social context to engage in actions that seek to remediate the continuing existence of this oppression. Hyland (personal communication, April 4, 2014) states that social justice education (SJE) can be seen as having three main domains: academic press, a culturally relevant curriculum that recognizes differing funds of knowledge, and critical consciousness. These domains shape the practices of social justice educators, including what they teach, how they teach, the environment they create in the classroom, and the beliefs they have about the ability of all students to learn (Feger, 2006; Brown, 2003; Sheets, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1995). While both SJE and ABR, particularly through policies like No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and Race to the Top (RTTT), advocate improving education for minority students, I explored through analysis of the discourses of these two teachers, Jordan and Nicole, whether there was additional pressure placed on social justice educators as a result of their attempt to navigate ABR while maintaining their identities and core beliefs as social justice educators.

Historical data shows that Black and Hispanic students have been most marginalized by the education system. As a result, ABR has sought ways to measure and improve equity in the educational system (McDermott, 2011). McDermott states, "…in public education, equity has been the main justification for the move to judge

performance. The emphasis on equity has also strengthened the tendency of performance accountability to lead to centralization of authority over public education, continuing a centralizing trend that predates performance accountability in education" (2011, p. 3). According to the National Center for Educational Statistics, in 2009, Hispanic students in grades four through eight scored between 21 and 26 points lower than their White counterparts in both mathematics and language arts on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), reflecting no significant change in the achievement gap from when the NAEP was administered in 1999 (Hemphill & Vanneman, 2010). Black students also scored at least 26 points lower than their White counterparts in both subjects (Vanneman, Hamilton, Baldwin Anderson, & Rahman, 2009). The response of policymakers to the persistent achievement gap has been to create evaluations for both teachers and students in order to measure the achievement and progress of different groups of students. When funding is tied to these tests, as in RTTT, the pressure on teachers and schools to ensure achievement on standardized tests increases, perhaps at the expense of SJE. According to Ladson- Billings (1994), culturally relevant teaching, which is another term often used to describe SJE, recognizes the necessity of integrating students' culture into all aspects of learning. Gay (2000) further emphasizes the significance of this integration, stating that incorporating the culture of students in the classroom helps those students use their own prior knowledge, experiences, and unique learning styles to be successful in the classroom. However, testing may unintentionally narrow the curriculum (see Firestone, Mayrowetz, & Fairman, 1998; Jenning, 2012) in a way that pulls time away from the teaching of issues that are relevant to these students' lives.

The work of social justice educators falls into three broad domains: academic press, cultural competence, and critical consciousness. As part of academic press, social justice educators develop a challenging curriculum with high standards for all students (Brown, 2003; Sheets, 1995). In this way, it is similar to ABR, which also strives to create a challenging curriculum for all students through things like the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) (Roach & Elliot, 2009; Betts, Costrell, Walberg, Phillip & Chinn, 2001). However, social justice educators also create a classroom environment that nurtures students, and they take personal responsibility for student success (Parsons, 2005; Sheets, 1995; Brown, 2003). As part of cultural competence, the literature on SJE encourages these teachers to recognize that differences in funds of knowledge are continually viewed as deficiencies in knowledge and to alter the standard curriculum in ways that represent historically marginalized students (Benson, 2003; Brown, 2003; Brenner, 1998). In doing so, the educators present texts that engage and empower students, rather than distancing them from the curriculum (Bell & Clark, 1998; Feger, 2006; Hefflin, 2003). In developing critical consciousness, social justice educators recognize that the standard curriculum often positions minority students as inferior educationally, which plays an enormous role in the formation of students' identities. Students who see their skills and history devalued or ignored in the educational system internalize this devaluation into a part of their identity, since, "How we are seen or recognized by others becomes, negatively or positively, a part of our identity" (Jenlink & Townes, 2009, p. 2). Minority students have continually seen their culture blamed for their failures academically, with no deeper examination of how the curriculum that is being taught may contribute to this (Sulieman, 2004; Ovando & McLaren, 2000). Thus,

social justice educators help students think and act critically in the face of deficit-model and stereotypical treatment of historically marginalized students and their communities (Gay, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1995), while providing them with the supports necessary to function successfully within the power dynamics of mainstream society (Howard, 2001; Lipman, 1995).

SJE would argue that when the experiences of students continue to be ignored, when education continues to operate in a manner that is subtractive of the knowledge base of historically marginalized students, and when success is defined in one way, historically marginalized students continue to dissociate from the educational system as a whole. Moreover, while linking high stakes testing to ABR has improved outcomes in general, the improvement has been greatest for White students, thereby increasing the discrepancy between White and non-White students, particularly African Americans and Latinos (Hanushek & Raymond, 2004). In addition, social justice educators feel that standardized testing does not necessarily allow for students to respond in culturally relevant manners, and studies of standards-based reforms from the 1980s onward have consistently shown the limiting effects of standardization on curriculum and teaching practices (see, for example, Hamilton, Stecher, & Yuan, 2008; Firestone, Mayrowetz, and Fairman, 1998; Cohen & Spillane, 1992). Thus, social justice educators must find a way to negotiate the demands of ABR, which call for increased attention to historically marginalized students but simultaneously limit the curriculum in ways that may make it difficult for social justice educators to recognize and value the contributions and ways of knowing of historically marginalized students, to allow them to become more critically conscious, and to incorporate culturally relevant materials.

In today's classrooms, teachers who believe strongly in SJE may be challenged to continue to implement these practices while also meeting the demands of the educational system, which tells them that their jobs are tied to student achievement on tests. In this study, I specifically looked at how Jordan and Nicole, who consciously self-identify as social justice educators, work within a standards-based environment. These teachers used specific discourses that built significance, shaped identities, distributed political goods, and enacted figured worlds surrounding both their personal ideologies of SJE and the ABR policy context. However, as Jordan and Nicole are real people, their discourses represented a real-world example of how personal ideology and discourses are impacted by a variety of factors. Their discourses did not fall on strict lines in favor of either SJE or ABR, demonstrating a much more nuanced identity than is often depicted in research.

According to Gee (2011), building significance occurs when individuals use language to make something more or less important (p. 92). He points out that things are not innately significant or trivial, but that the way in which a person presents those things gives them significance or downplays significance. When addressing the education of historically marginalized students, one topic that can either be given significance or downplayed is race. Individuals who downplay the role of race in education often engage in colorblind racism, which may be seen in the language used by that person surrounding the role of race in the classroom and in educational success.

In shaping identities, Gee (2011) points out that an individual can use language to shape both his or her own identity as well as the identity of others (p. 106-110). Whether the individual uses vernacular language or more formal language is a signifier of the identity that he or she is engaging at the moment. Additionally, the language used to

describe others, such as "high" and "low" students, defines the identity of those students, as well as the teacher, in that particular situation. This use of language positions others within a place where they can act and speak within during this conversation (p. 110).

The distribution of political goods is often deeply entrenched in the individual (Gee, 2011 p. 123). Political or social goods can be anything that society or an individual social group views as being worth having (Gee, 2011 p. 118). While many social goods are not agreed upon, generally, face needs, such as being included but not imposed upon, and being accepted as "normal" by society are desirable social goods. Additionally, in American society, being seen as having earned one's position in life is also a generally desirable social good (Gee, 2011 p. 120-122).

Many of these ideas about what counts as political or social goods are closely linked to what figured worlds an individual enacts. Figured worlds are the, "stories, theories, or models in our minds about what is 'normal' or 'typical'" (Gee, 2011 p. 168). An amalgamation of the previously mentioned ideas, Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, and Cain (1998) states that figured worlds are, "A socially and culturally constructed realm of interpretation in which particular characters and actors are recognized, significance is assigned to certain acts, and particular outcomes are valued over others" (p. 52). López-Bonilla explains that looking at figured worlds could help us understand the relationship between the language a person uses and the socially enacted identity (2011, p. 50). In education, these figured worlds are varied, but can include ideas such as poor and minority students are destined to fail, all have an equal opportunity to succeed, and curriculum is neutral. By enacting these figured worlds, teachers can position themselves

and their students in ways that increase or negate personal responsibility for student success.

Traditionally, educational resources refer to the items that a student has access to outside of school that influence his or her education (Teachman, 1987; Roscigno & Ainsworth-Darnell, 1999). These include but are not limited to computers, books, newspapers, and opportunities to build cultural capital through things such as museum visits, visiting historical sites, and attending plays and musical events. Bourdeiu (1977) stated that schools are not neutral and that certain preferences, attitudes, and behaviors associated with the dominant class are valued in schools. Several studies have found that increased access to educational resources, which is affected by family and social-economic status, is associated with increased educational attainment, although race may mediate this effect (Teachman, 1987; Roscigno & Ainsworth-Darnell, 1999). However, today, educational resources may also include the access that students have to these items in schools.

Funds of knowledge are closely tied to Discourse, and the two combined can help understand SJE. Moje, Ciechanowski, Kramer, Ellis, Carrillo, and Collazo (2004), state that

> It is important to acknowledge many different funds of knowledge (Moll, Vélez-Ibañéz, & Greenberg, 1989) such as homes, peer groups, and other systems of networks of relationships that shape the oral and written texts young people make meaning of and produce as they move from classroom to classroom and from home to peer group, to school, or to community. It is equally important to examine the ways that these funds, or networks and relationships, shape ways of knowing, reading, writing, and talking – what Gee (1996) calls Discourses – that youth use or try to learn in secondary schools. (p. 38)

In schools, the ways of knowing, language, and stories that students enter school with from their homes and communities, as well as other relationships, shape their

participation in the classroom. SJE recognizes that the Funds of Knowledge that students enter school with can be a valuable tool in helping them achieve educational success and engaging them in the classroom.

By conducting a phenomenological study that focused on the reported experiences and discourses of self-identified social justice educators, I gained a greater understanding of how ideology and policy combine to influence teacher discourses.

Guiding Hypothesis

This dissertation study was guided by the hypothesis that dedicated social justice educators were pressured by the demands of their personal values, which call for a more expansive curriculum that attends to the knowledge base of historically marginalized students and is critical of the dominant curriculum, and the need to adhere to ABR policies that reify curriculum and practices that can be at odds with SJE. Historically, studies of ABR, dating from its inception in the 1960s, demonstrate a narrowing effect on curriculum. As a result of NCLB provisions, students are given standardized tests annually in English Language Arts and mathematics in grades three through eight, as well as once in grades nine through twelve, which means that the English Language Arts and mathematics content that must be taught by a particular point in time**,** namely the test administration date, is clearly dictated to teachers. My hypothesis was that this testing would potentially make teachers more likely to focus on what they believed would be on the tests, rather than the elements of critical consciousness or cultural competence that are inherent in SJE. However, my conclusions found that teachers who were committed to SJE found ways to navigate ABR while still focusing on critical consciousness and

cultural competence, although this was heavily influenced by how ABR existed within the context of the school as well as the teacher's own personal background..

In addition to the narrowing of the curriculum, this study also relied on research that questioned teacher motivation in the face of ABR. Recent reforms, like earlier reforms, rely heavily on incentives, for example the removal of tenure and the initiation of incentive pay. However, previous studies examining teacher motivation found that if teachers view the standards as irrelevant or unattainable, then they will not adjust their teaching (Finnegan & Gross, 2007; Rowan, 1996). Yet, RTTT is still offering the teacher an incentive, tenure, which is now tied partly to assessment scores. As a result of these incentives, I began with the hypothesis that teachers felt increasing pressure, limited opportunities to implement SJE. I felt that this was a result of the pressure to increase test scores, which would result in the reification of a curriculum that limited opportunities for SJE by focusing on test preparation and testing material that did not attend to the knowledge base of historically marginalized students. Again, my hypothesis did not align with my conclusions. In the end, I found that the level of pressure was highly dependent on the context in which the educator worked.

To summarize, I believed that when ABR was combined with teachers' personal ideologies surrounding SJE, pressure might have caused teachers to act and teach in ways that were at odds with their personal ideologies. However, even teachers who consciously self-identify as social justice educators might have vastly different ideological understandings of SJE. Major theorists in the field, such as James Banks (1999), developed continua of multicultural education and SJE that are critical in understanding what is actually going on in classrooms and how practice is linked to ideology. Since this

study looked at how teachers' ideologies affect their reported practices within the context of ABR, an initial ideological understanding that was on the lower level of the continua could hypothetically result in less pressure to alter practices, as those teachers would have ideological beliefs that did not promote dramatic alterations of the standard curriculum or methods of assessment. This was clearly seen in the case of Jordan.

In examining the pressures from these different approaches using Gee's (2011) tools for analysis of discourse, I gained a greater understanding of how ideology and policy combined to influence teacher discourses around SJE. Particularly, I focused on the ways that teachers' figured worlds, understanding of the distribution of political goods, creation of identities for themselves and students, and building of significance were present in the discourses surrounding ideological beliefs and reported teaching practices.

Research Questions

This phenomenological research looked at several questions in order to gain a fuller sense of the influence of ABR on social justice educators and their practices. Through these questions, I gained an understanding of both how teachers define SJE and how they adjusted practices in response to the most recent ABR policies. The questions, which are drawn from the literature, are:

1. What discourses do self-identified social-justice educators use in describing their ideologies, practices, and beliefs about learning and teaching?

    a. How do these discourses reflect the ABR policy context?

    b. How do these teachers perceive that ABR is influencing their teaching and how is this reflected in their discourse?

c. How do teachers committed to SJE working in an environment driven by
    ABR work to accomplish success for students and how do they define
    student success?

CHAPTER 2

A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Overview

According to the Equity Assistance Centers (2013), the United States has been

working since the 1950s to improve educational equity; however, after 60 years, "we are

still struggling to ensure the civil rights and equitable education of all students" (p. 2).

During the years since *Brown v. Board of Ed.,* accountability based reform (ABR) and

social justice education (SJE) are two fields that have continually sought to improve the

educational outcomes of students in the United States. While ABR holds a more formal

position in the American educational system as a result of its influence on policy, SJE has

continually been a force in academia. In this literature review, I look at how the

foundations of these two fields and their attention to providing the skills necessary for

academic and workplace success, to helping shape positive identities, and to providing

students with the foundations for successfully navigating numerous environments. While

SJE has consistently targeted minority students, ABR has also placed increasing

emphasis on this group through policies like the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001

(NCLB). In this review, I demonstrate how both ideology, which I define as the

conscious and unconscious beliefs that teachers hold about education, and policy

influence the practices of educators, particularly those with a vested interest in social

justice education, and how this results in the potential for competing pressures on

educators. As new policies are continually implemented, it is important to reflect on

previous research on policies and their implementation to better understand the potential

benefits and pitfalls of these new policies.

Defining the Fields: Accountability Based Reform Policies and Social Justice Education

Today, teachers must contend with a plethora of standardized tests and teacher

evaluation measures. This section will examine the policies of the last decade, namely the

NCLB and Race to the Top (RTTT); as well as the evolution of the field of SJE in order

to provide a foundation for further discussion.

The evolution of accountability based reform. Although accountability based

reform has a long history dating back to the early twentieth century (see Tyack, 1974),

with the release of *A Nation at Risk*, the government felt an increased need to hold

schools accountable for the education of students (West and Peterson, 2003; Resnick,

Stein, & Coon, 2008). Since equitable school funding was debated heavily, taxpayers and

legislators alike looked for a way to measure the results of increased funding and

equitable education. McDermott (2011) points out that this resulted in, "a new definition

of educational equity in terms of students' attainment of a threshold of knowledge and

skills… and… promised to focus equity efforts on what was most important for students"

(p. 4). Along these lines, ABR aimed to improve standards, align testing and curriculum

to these standards, and, initially, increase local control (Massell, Kirst, & Hoppe, 1997).

While ABR aims to establish a minimum bar for what should be taught, how to respond

to educators whose students do not meet the standards, as demonstrated by performance

on standardized tests, has always been a source of contention (Hess, 2002). Also

problematic was the establishment of standards themselves. While the mathematics and English language arts standards were established with support across the political spectrum, standards in the areas of social studies and science proved to be highly controversial (Nash, 1995; Barton, 2009). Thus, ABR faced numerous challenges in both development and implementation.

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. When NCLB became part of education's reality, 48 of the 50 states already had testing programs in place for mathematics and English language arts or reading (LeFloch, Goertz, & Duffy, 2001). Under the Improving America's Schools Act of 1994 (IASA), states were required to test students once in each of three grade spans: third-fifth, sixth-ninth, and tenth-twelfth (H.R. 6, 1994). Seven years later, NCLB required states to test students each year in grades three through eight and once in grades nine through twelve in both mathematics and English language arts (P.L. 107-110, 2001). By the 2007-2008 school year students were also assessed in science one time each during grades three to five, six to nine, and ten to twelve (P.L. 107-110, 2001). In order to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), schools must meet progress targets for all of the subgroups present in the student population. These subgroups are: all students, American Indian, Black, Asian, White, Hispanic, Limited English Proficient, Special Education, Migrant Status, and Free and Reduced Price Lunch (P.L. 107-110, 2001).

Initially, many groups hailed NCLB for drawing attention to those who are historically neglected by the educational system (Darling-Hammond, 2007). However, since its implementation, many groups have come forward to criticize NCLB as a result

of the unintended consequences that negatively impacted those groups that NCLB was

intended to help (Darling-Hammond, 2007; Sunderman & Kim, 2004). As part of the

legislation, schools that fail to make AYP for any one of the subgroups face

consequences ranging from internal restructuring in partnership with a local educational

agency to removal of school leadership to school closure based on the number of

consecutive years of failure (U.S. Department of Education, 2003). As a result, NCLB is

a frequent target of both study and criticism.

Race to the Top. Following in the footsteps of NCLB is another standards-based

reform that was implemented under the administration of Barack Obama. According to

the federal government, Race to the Top (RTTT) is a trailblazing and historic educational

reform contest (U.S. Department of Education, 2013; Whitehouse, 2013). In 2009, RTTT

was announced as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. It has

four goals:

- Adopting standards and assessments that prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace and to compete in the global economy;
- Building data systems that measure student growth and success, and inform teachers and principals about how they can improve instruction;
- Recruiting, developing, rewarding, and retaining effective teachers and principals, especially where they are needed most; and
- Turning around our lowest-achieving schools. (U.S. Department of Education, 2009)

Thus, RTTT mandates standardized testing, teacher evaluations linked to these tests, and

the adoption of Common Core State Standards and aligned assessments. To date, the

federal government has granted over four billion dollars to states, with 19 states receiving

funding, 34 states modifying their existing laws to "facilitate needed change", and 48

states joining together to create "a voluntary set of rigorous college- and career-ready

standards" (Whitehouse, 2013). The goal of the program seems to be to produce students who can be successful in both an academic setting and in life beyond schools. As such, it encourages teaching students to work within the system, for example by enabling them to successfully use academic English, a skill that is necessary for success beyond the classroom environment. However, despite the overwhelmingly positive language used by the federal government to describe the programming and its attention to and goals for the students in the lowest-performing schools, the responses of educators to RTTT have been contentious, with critics stating that schools cannot successfully be run like businesses (Ravitch, 2010; Nussbaum, 2010). Organizations such as The Equity Assistance Centers believe the issue is in the implementation, rather than the standards themselves, stating that, "the positive potential of these new standards can only be realized if state and local policymakers, education leaders, and practitioners view equity as both an essential means to and an essential outcome of Common Core implementation" (2013, p. 2). Thus, if educators value equity and receive appropriate support, the CCSS have the potential to improve educational equity and outcomes for all students; however, if adequate support is not provided, "the inequities long inherent in American education will persist and deepen, with greater numbers of our most vulnerable students pushed into failure" (The Educational Equity Assistance Centers, 2013 p. 2).

Evolution of the field of social justice. Like ABR, SJE has a long history, beginning in the 1960s and evolving continually into a more nuanced field. When the field first emerged out of the Civil Rights movement, it focused largely on the inequities facing minorities and oppressed groups in schools (Gorski, 1999). By the 1980s,

however, it focused not only on students and materials provided to students in schools but also on the structures of the schools themselves (Banks, 1993). Today, it encompasses a wide variety of groups, topics, and reforms under the heading of diversity, while simultaneously attempting to find ways of aligning the field with an increasingly standardized educational system (Banks & Banks, 2010).

To reflect the changes in the field of SJE, the definition has also evolved. What today many refer to as SJE evolved over the years out of the field of multicultural education. An early definition by Olneck (1990) framed multicultural education as focusing on the pluralism that exists in society while simultaneously searching for similarities between groups, stating,

> Pluralism must recognize… the identities and claims of groups as groups and must facilitate, or at least symbolically represent and legitimate, collective identity. It must enhance the salience of group membership as a basis for participation in society and ensure that pedagogy, curriculum, and modes of assessment are congruent with valued cultural differences. (p. 148)

This represents an early attempt to include the structures of schools by looking at not only what is taught, and how, but also at how students are evaluated. Yet this definition does not fully delve into the structures that create the inequalities that SJE attempts to combat. With the growing attention to the field emerged the National Association for Multicultural Education (NAME), which advocates for "educational equality and social justice in schools" (NAME, 2012). In line with evolution of the field, their definition of multicultural education presents a nuanced understanding of diversity, moving well beyond racial and ethnic differences, (NAME, 2012). They also discuss multicultural education as something that permeates school practices and the ways in which it should permeate the organization itself. In addition, they explicitly name issues that must be

addressed in the curriculum, moving the focus away from racism and introducing a

broader view of the issues that create oppression in education and society.

As the definition of multicultural education has evolved, it has come to be

intrinsically associated with SJE and equity pedagogy. Hyland (2010) writes, "Equity

pedagogy assumes that if teachers and schools do not consciously attempt to counter

injustice, then by default, they support it" (p. 83). Since the explicit purpose of

multicultural education is to address issues associated with a variety of different forms of

injustice and discrimination, equity pedagogy naturally fits in with multicultural

education. In addition, SJE recognizes the natural rights of all individuals and their right

to be recognized in society (Greene, 1998).

Although the definition of SJE continues to be contested, a few commonalities

concerning the goals have been recognized. In SJE,

> it is assumed that the bottom line of teaching is enhancing students' learning and
> their life chances by challenging the inequities of school and society. This
> perspective is based on recognition of significant disparities in the distribution of
> educational opportunities, resources, achievement, and positive outcomes between
> minority or low-income students and their white, middle-class counterparts. This
> recognition of disparities is coupled with the position that teachers can and should
> be both educators and advocates who are committed to the democratic ideal and
> to diminishing existing inequities in school and society by helping to redistribute
> educational opportunities. (Cochran-Smith, Shakman, Jong, Terell, Barnatt, &
> McQuillan, 2009, p. 350)

SJE focuses on three main tenets: academic press, cultural competence, and critical

consciousness, which may be present in varying degrees in individual teacher ideologies

and practices (Hyland, personal communication, April 4, 2014). Together, these three

tenets encourage social justice educators to have high standards for all students, to use

and evaluate diverse funds of knowledge, to think critically about the content taught in

schools and the way it is evaluated, and to thoroughly integrate information into the curriculum that reflects the diversity present in society, both in terms of ways of knowing and content (see, for example. Ladson-Billings 1994; Brown, 2003; Sheets, 1995; Brenner, 1998; Tate, 1995; Lipman, 1995).

As the field evolves, it is increasingly evident that the pressures of ABR may negatively impact those seeking to meet the goals of SJE. The path of ABR is aimed at increasing test scores, altering teacher pedagogy and curriculum but generally viewing content as neutral. The ultimate goal of SJE is pervasive reform of the inequities in the educational system through changes in what and how content is taught and recognition of the need to teach students to be critical of the existing power structures. Both systems recognize the need to provide students with certain basic skills and understandings, to have effective teachers, and to set high standards for students. However, ABR links student and teacher success to test scores on one annual exam, which drives a narrowing of the curriculum, while SJE demands an expansion and customization of the curriculum that is critical and rooted in inquiry and questions of justice that are related to the students. Yet little research currently exists on how a teacher dedicated to SJE works within the ABR framework and whether they are able to resist the narrowing of the curriculum.

Generating Change under Accountability Based Reform and Social Justice

Education

Both ABR and SJE have a stated end goal of improving academic achievement for historically marginalized students. In this section, I will examine the ways in which both ABR and SJE have been successful and have failed in achieving this goal.

Research on the impact of Race to the Top on generating change. In this section, I will look at the existing research on RTTT and how this research comes to contradictory and unclear conclusions. Some of this demonstrates how the policy may be creating contradictory pressures, especially for those teachers who do not believe that the changes or evaluations are valid measures of improvement for historically marginalized students.

As with earlier reforms, RTTT relies on a measure of success that is tied to a standardized evaluation system. In early responses to RTTT, two trends emerge. One is that states have indeed enacted significant changes in response to the RTTT mandate. The second is that these changes may be ineffective in reaching the goals of RTTT or in improving educational achievement as measured by standardized outcomes. The findings seem to be in line with previous ABR initiatives, with warnings against limiting curriculum and teaching to the test. However, since the measurement of student growth, whether on a standardized test or a classroom assessment, is closely linked to teacher employment, the danger is that these new evaluations will place pressure on educators that will further narrow curriculum and de-emphasize the tenets of SJE. Teachers must be mindful of RTTT because of the potential impact on their employment, and thus must

find ways to motivate students to be successful on these exams. In addition, students may feel pressure to be successful on these exams, due to their exposure to teacher and administrator stress surrounding the exams.

Unlike its predecessor, NCLB, the evaluations of RTTT provide little information on historically marginalized students, which leaves teachers with little information on how they might target this population. This may present a particular challenge for social justice educators, whose ideology draws their attention to this population. Gerson (2012) points out that RTTT makes funding contingent on directly linking teacher evaluations, pay, and continued employment to standardized testing. Schools receive a relatively small amount of money in exchange for dramatically changing their schools. This may also place pressure on teachers, whose jobs are contingent on demonstrating progress via standardized measures of success, which is not necessarily what SJE sees as the most valid or effective measure of growth. In addition, the guidelines for RTTT funding stipulate that schools measure growth of individual students through evaluations at both the beginning and end of the year, despite the continuing controversy surrounding the validity of standardized tests as effective measures of student achievement (Kumashiro, 2012; Krashen, 2010, in Gerson, 2012). Kumashiro (2012) explains that tests are so narrowly designed that they tell us little about learning; programs like RTTT do little to address the underlying issues, like poverty and segregation, that are demonstrated causes of the continuing achievement gap; and the continuing failure to succeed on standardized tests further disadvantages those schools that most need educational support by expropriating funding from teaching and directing them towards testing. (p. 8).

Ultimately, the use of controversial measures to evaluate teachers, particularly when these measures reify the traditional curriculum that is at odds with the tenets of SJE, may create additional ideological conflicts for social justice educators. Previous studies examining teacher motivation found that if teachers view the standards as irrelevant or unattainable, they will not adjust their teaching (Finnegan & Gross, 2007; Rowan, 1996). Since the measures of evaluation used by ABR are seen by some as controversial and at odds with the tenets of SJE, social justice educators may simply choose not to change their teaching.

However, ABR has pushed educators to improve the quality of education offered to all students, which has the potential to increase equity. Scheurich, Skrla, and Johnson (200d) found that, ''Before standards and accountability systems, the curriculum actually provided to low-income students of all races was typically a 'low- track' one, meaning basic and narrow'' (p. 22). However, CCSS, which are tied to RTTT, have the potential to increase equity by pushing for higher standards of learning. As McDermott (2011) points out, "Policymakers enact performance-based accountability because they expect that the collection and reporting of performance data, evaluated against benchmarks and coupled with some sort of consequences for performance, will induce agencies to improve their actual performance" (p. 17). While this is the goal, McDermott (2011) also points out that this may take the emphasis away from equity and put greater emphasis on centralization. Again, although ABR desires to improve equity and educational outcomes, the actual ways that policies have been implemented in schools may be limiting this desired goal.

The consequences of social justice education on teaching and learning.

Through the domains of academic press, cultural competence, and critical consciousness, SJE attends to pedagogical and curricular transformations while simultaneously promoting improved student outcomes through engagement with the dialogues of power. While not all teachers conceptualize and enact their ideological beliefs in precisely the same way, the tenets of academic press, cultural competence, and critical consciousness are consistent guiding principles.

In the area of academic press, a great deal of research demonstrated the importance of looking at how students learn and what knowledge and ways of learning they bring with them from their communities (see, for example, Ladson-Billings, 1994). Sleeter (2005) states that, "Learning to work with multiple perspectives, multiple frames of reference, and multiple funds of knowledge is at the heart of multicultural curriculum design" (p. 32). The framework developed by Sleeter (Appendix A) can be useful in analyzing the level where teachers' self-reported practices fall. As social justice educators focus on academic press, they must first recognize that, "all students have the ability to think and reason," in order that they might set high standards that demand academic success from all students (Nieto, 2002 p. 7). Once social justice educators have created a curriculum that challenges the students and demands excellence, while simultaneously creating a classroom environment that allows students to be successful and becoming personally invested in their success, they can shift focus to the domain of critical consciousness (Parsons, 2005; Pierce, 2005; Sheets 1995; Brown, 2003).

In looking at the tenets of cultural competence and critical consciousness, it is essential to acknowledge the decision of what counts as knowledge and an understanding of who gets to make that decision.

> How or on what basis curriculum knowledge is selected has been obscured by the so-called classic curriculum question, 'What knowledge is of most worth?' which dates to an 1859 essay…. Framing the question of the selection of curriculum knowledge in this way gives the appearance of beneficence in the public interest. But it deflects questions of who, or which peoples, are left out 'in the public interest'. (Cornbleth & Waugh, 1995, p. 50)

How teachers think about their practice, who they believe is responsible for deciding what is included in curriculum, and what they think children should know and why, all assist in developing SJE. However, social justice educators also recognize the need to allow historically marginalized students access to the dialogues of power, whatever those may be (Delpit, 1988). Educators who are promoting social justice must do so within the framework of promoting high achievement and outcomes. Thus, while ABR does not provide support for the tenets of SJE or recognize the principles of SJE as valuable in improving education, social justice educators cannot ignore the need to provide their students with the tools necessary to be successful within the current framework so that they might ultimately affect change in the world. However, they must also teach their students to be critical of social inequities and see the ways that power operates in society in order that they may engage in social justice work to act on issues related to their lives (Gay, 2002; Ladson- Billings, 1994; Lipman, 1995; Tate, 1995; Howard, 2001). Therefore, SJE works within the frameworks of ABR policies while simultaneously being critical of the reification of knowledge, curriculum, and power generated by standardization.

Patri (1917 in Bogotch, 2000) found that SJE is particularly difficult to implement

in the context of changing demographics. When educators manage to create an

environment that is effective for SJE, that environment is not static, and thus programs

and practices must constantly shift. This makes it extremely difficult to promote a certain

set of practices or programs for educators to use in creating a successful SJE program.

Rather, SJE is highly individualistic, which is why it rarely fits with policies and leads

Bogotch (2000) to conclude that,

> (1) There can be no fixed or predictable meanings of social justice prior to actually engaging in social and academic discourses;
> (2) The center or unity of any educational reform is so dynamic that it can not hold together for long;
> (3) The results of our work [just and unjust] are always fragile and fleeting; and, therefore,
> (4) All social justice/educational reform efforts must be deliberately and continuously reinvented and critiqued again and again. (p. 10)

This makes it extremely difficult to define or evaluate whether SJE programs are

successful in implementing change and improving educational outcomes for historically

marginalized students, as they are entirely contextual, difficult to define, and ever

evolving. What is evident, however, is that this idea that education must constantly

evolve based on context differs radically from the current educational reforms, which

encourage standardization of curriculum to meet the demands of testing. Some of the

problems faced by educators in implementing these reforms will be examined in the

following section.

Although SJE has many individuals and educational researchers who support its

use in the classroom and suggest that it improves educational outcomes for students,

exactly what SJE looks like and how it should be implemented is unclear. This lack of

clarity results in increasing criticism of the theory in general. Since there are no predetermined content standards, each teacher must individually transform existing curricula and integrate social justice education into existing standards in his or her own classroom. While previous research demonstrates the positive impact of SJE on identity formation (see Jenlick & Townes, 2008; Noguera, 2009) and show successful implementation in individual classrooms (see, for example, Myer, Capps, Crawford, & Ross, 2012; Kimmerer, 2012; Hatcher, 2012; Rich, 2012; Leonard, 2008; Moses & Cobb, 2001; Bratlinger, 2005; Staples, 2005; Nethsinghe, 2012; Choi & Kwon, 2013), it is still very much an individually motivated system, put in place by teachers who have experienced success with its principles rather than being a part of local, state, or federal policy or curriculum programs.

The Implementation of Accountability Based Reform and Social Justice Education.

Although educators have implemented both ABR and SJE, this implementation has not always been smooth. For example, many studies prior to NCLB and RTTT found that the implementation of ABR resulted in a narrowing of the curriculum. Firestone, Mayrowetz, and Fairman (1998) found in their study of open-ended state test questions that teachers reported specifically focusing instruction on skills and content that they knew would be on the test, which were different from skills and content that they taught prior to the implementation of the state standardized tests. As a result of the tests, teachers may significantly reduce or completely eliminate attention to subjects and topics that are not tested (Hamilton, Steecher, & Yuan, 2008). However, it is possible that, without tests, important topics could also be ignored.

With regard to SJE, the lack of a common definition or a set of measurable practices creates difficulty for social justice educators as well as those wishing to evaluate them. This is partially a result of the nature of SJE, which calls for educational content and practices to be responsive to the particularities of the individual students rather than a standardized curriculum or measures for evaluation.

Problems faced by educators in the implementation of social justice education. There is a much smaller body of research conducted on the implementation of SJE than of ABR. In my previous work, I found that there exists a vast difference between theory and practice with regard to SJE. My research found that teachers worked from a much narrower definition of SJE than is used in academia (Dillon, 2013). Since teachers were relying largely on a definition that limited SJE to the study of racially and ethnically different individuals and cultures around certain historical heroes and holidays, students were receiving a more limited exposure to multicultural education in the first place. In looking at Banks' (1999) continuum for multicultural education, these educators fell solidly within the contributions approach and the additive approach, which focuses only on the second dimension of SJE. While Banks' continuum reaches the highest levels of SJE and encompasses all three dimensions, these educators demonstrated no understanding of academic press or critical consciousness as part of SJE. Rather, the contributions approach looks at holidays, heroes, and special events from different cultures but in no way alters the curriculum, while the additive approach goes a step further by incorporating literature about diverse cultures into the curriculum, but it still does not change the mainstream curriculum or alter the thinking in the classroom. None

of the teachers in my study indicated the use of any practices that reached the level of

Banks' transformative or social action approaches, which would involve a substantial

change to the curriculum and a critical approach to knowledge. However, if policy does

not demand the incorporation of SJE and schools are not offering professional

development around SJE, it is not surprising that teachers are not reaching the highest

levels of SJE.

Success in the implementation of social justice education within the context of accountability-based reform. Despite the potential challenges posed by

standardization of curriculum, the demands of standardized testing, and teacher

evaluation systems, several studies have demonstrated that these policies do not preclude

the use of social justice pedagogy. This section will look at the ways that social justice

educators have continued to engage in SJE and support a social justice ideology of

success in the face of ABR. While social justice educators do not see the two systems as

mutually exclusive in that high student achievement on standardized measures of growth

may occur in conjunction with SJE, ABR does not take into account the ideas of success

as seen by social justice educators, narrowly defining success as achievement on a

standardized test, and also fails to see SJE as a means to achieving success.

Sleeter and Stillman (2007) found in their study of 10 California educators that

many of them engaged a tactic they termed "using standards strategically" in order to

prioritize attention to standards and provide students with a rich, meaningful educational

experience. These teachers saw the standards as a starting point for developing the

curriculum, not the curriculum itself, and thus were able to use their own prior knowledge

of what students needed to know for the next grade, for college, and in life to determine which standards to focus on and what to deemphasize (Sleeter & Stillman, 2007, p. 22). Additionally, these educators utilized their knowledge of their students to find materials that addressed the standards in ways that were culturally relevant. However, Sleeter and Stillman ultimately concluded that teacher efforts alone to engage with best practices for historically marginalized students are not enough: administrators and policymakers must also educate themselves about these best practices and treat teachers as professionals with a great deal of knowledge (2007, p. 27-28). Since these teachers had to navigate both the requirements of NCLB and the California State standards, their success in continuing to implement social justice pedagogy demonstrates that this is a possibility for any teacher who is truly devoted to the ideals espoused by this pedagogy.

Several themes mentioned by Sleeter and Stillman emerge as trends in the literature. For example, success is more likely under standardized education in schools whose leaders understand and promote excellence, who offer opportunities for teachers to receive additional professional development, and who continue to hold all students to high standards (Skrla, McKenzie, & Scheurich, 2007; Darling-Hammond, 2007; Hall & Parker, 2007; McCombs, 2007). At the same time, it is important not to broadly categorize students but rather to see them each as individuals with unique ways of learning and to promote individual success through things like Learner-Centered Teaching (McCombs, 2007). However, even with high standards, individualized learning strategies, motivated and well-trained teachers, and supportive leadership, students still may be unsuccessful on standardized measures of success if they do not have equal

access to educational resources (Darling-Hammond, 2007). Thus, even those most dedicated to finding a way to meld ABR and SJE may face challenges if they lack educational resources, such as access to books, newspapers, and other sources that may provide them with the material needed to integrate SJE into their classrooms. This is particularly problematic, since access to resource is not considered when evaluating students, or their teachers, under federal policies. Unlike in the ideological foundations of social justice pedagogy, federal policy ignores the outside factors that contribute to classroom achievement.

Conclusions

While SJE and ABR share a common goal of improving educational outcomes for historically marginalized students, their approaches differ dramatically. Under ABR, the emphasis is placed on improving achievement through rigorous standards, frequent testing, and evaluation of teachers to ensure that students are receiving effective instruction. While SJE also believes in holding students to high standards, it recognizes the importance of altering the curriculum, practices, and beliefs of teachers so that they value the skills of historically marginalized students; see their skills, stories, and histories as valuable; teach students to be critical of existing power dynamics; and instruct students in ways that allow them to be successful within the current power structure. In today's society, this necessitates that social justice educators assist their students in achieving academic success on standardized tests even while teaching them to be critical of these tests. In order to understand how this is playing out in today's educational system, it is necessary to look at the discourses that social justice educators use in describing their

ideologies, practices, and beliefs about learning and teaching within the current policy

context.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Overview

Within the field of qualitative research, this study used phenomenology. Historically located in the work of Heidigger and Huserl, phenomenology aims to look at the lived experiences of the research participants within a particular lifeworld, or framework (Porter & Cohen, 2013). One of the largest critiques of qualitative research in general and phenomenological research in particular is that researchers do not clearly define the approach that they are using (Trainor & Graue, 2013). In order to avoid this critique, this research was strongly grounded in the hermeneutic approach to phenomenological research. This approach combines descriptive and interpretive methods, "to determine how people interpret their lives and make meaning of what they experience" (Porter & Cohen, 2013 p. 184). In my study, I looked at the self-reported actions, beliefs, and experiences,of two social justice educators in New York City, Jordan and Nicole, and how the discourses they engaged in when presented with the demands of ABR, specifically RTTT, defined the lived experiences of these educators. Rather than look at the lives of these individuals and interpret them myself, I asked them to explain to me how ABR manifested itself in their classrooms and schools, how it influenced their identity as a social justice educator, and how it influenced their classroom practices. Moreover, I looked at the ways that their environments, a traditional public school and a charter school, influenced both their identities and discourses surrounding ABR and SJE.

Data Sources

Participant Selection

As this was a phenomenological study, "it is essential that all participants have experience of the phenomenon being studied" (Creswell, 2007 p. 128). Thus, according to Creswell, it was most useful to use criterion sampling in order to ensure that all participants had experienced the phenomenon. This was particularly difficult, as I had to find participants who described their ideology and practices as I have defined SJE. Originally, I planned to recruit participants through Facebook groups where the discussions seemed to be in line with my definition of SJE. I initially cast a wide net by posting messages to the Facebook.com groups "Dump Duncan", "Badass Teachers Association", "Teachers for Social Justice", "Opt Out of the State Test: The National Movement", "NJTAG (New Jersey Teacher Activist Group)", "National Association for Multicultural Education", and "BATs In ELA", which are devoted to social justice issues in education. The groups "Dump Duncan", "Badass Teachers Association", "Opt Out of the State Test: The National Movement", and "NJTAG (New Jersey Teacher Activist Group)" are explicitly fighting against federal reforms in order to allow for more constructivist teaching, while "National Association for Multicultural Education" and "Teachers for Social Justice" also oppose federal reforms but have a more explicit focus on social justice. The "Badass Teachers Association" states that their mission is to,

> give voice to every teacher who refuses to be blamed for the failure of our
> society to erase poverty and inequality through education. BAT members refuse
> to accept assessments, tests and evaluations created and imposed by corporate
> driven entities that have contempt for authentic teaching and learning. (Badass
> Teachers Association, 2014)

Similarly, NJTAG states, "The Mission of the New Jersey Teacher Activist Group (NJTAG) is to ensure equitable access to quality, public, progressive educational opportunities for ALL children and to foster and support teacher agency and activism both inside and outside the classroom" (NJTAG, 2014). Both of these groups, as well as the others I initially attempted to use for recruitment, promoted ideals that were in line with my definition of SJE. In addition, they were dedicated to both discussion and action surrounding current educational policies. Thus, they seemed to serve as an ideal starting point for recruiting self-identified social-justice educators who would be most likely to experience a conflict between their personal ideologies and ABR in ways that affected their identities.

Ultimately, recruitment from these groups did not garner participants for this dissertation study. Although I reached out to the individuals in charge of the groups and posted numerous messages, the most promising group, "Badass Teachers Association" (BATs), did not allow the posting of the final recruitment, insisting that they need to pre-approve all materials sent to group members. Initially, BATs administration expressed both interest in and support for my dissertation, but they seemed confused by the survey component of the dissertation, and I never received approval to reach out to their members. The other groups allowed me to post, but I received no responses from group members. Interestingly, although these groups were against testing or the implementation of CCSS, a few of groups also were critical of the ideas of social justice. Individuals criticized social justice as a progressive buzzword, socialistic indoctrination, and the

antithesis of the purpose of teaching (Personal Communication, October 2014). Thus, I had to engage in a different strategy for recruitment.

Ultimately, two forms of recruitment did work. First, I used a post on my personal Facebook page (Appendix B), in which I tagged specific "Facebook Friends" who had posted previously about SJE. From this, I was able to gain one participant, Jordan. My second strategy was to speak to individuals I knew who worked in education. Through friends and my dissertation advisor, I was put in contact with several other individuals. These individuals were emailed the same recruitment posting used for Facebook pages. This resulted in one additional participant who completed all interviews, Nicole. I also attempted to recruit additional participants by attending a presentation by Gloria Ladson-Billings at Rutgers University in February 2015 as well as the NYCORE conference on "Justice, Not Just Tests" in March 2015. Although I made initial contact with several other individuals, none of these individuals ultimately participated in the dissertation. One individual completed the survey, paperwork, and initial interview, but then dropped out of the study.

For the convenience of conducting interviews, I initially decided to recruit teachers from New York and New Jersey; ultimately, both teachers involved in the study taught in New York City. Both New York and New Jersey happen to have received RTTT funding but are in drastically different stages of implementation, as New York received funding in the second round of funding, with their award announced in August 2010, while New Jersey received funding in the third round, with their award announced in December 2011. The original recruitment posting (Appendix B) also specifically

targeted English Language Arts and mathematics teachers in grades four through eight

who had a pre-existing desire or current use of social justice pedagogy in the classroom.

However, although that population of teachers initially seemed to be those who were

most consistently affected, across states, by the new teacher evaluation systems

implemented as part of the RTTT requirements, the teachers who ultimately participated

in the study were involved in teaching other disciplines that were directly affected by

ABR, even if there was not a "high-stakes" test administered at their grade level.

All teachers who responded to the recruitment posting were asked to fill out a

brief survey (Appendix C), which was used a to gain an understanding of their personal

definitions of a social justice educator as well as a sense of whether they defined SJE in

the same ways that I do. This survey, which was based on the literature on SJE, looked at

practitioner beliefs and behaviors. Since there are many definitions of SJE, as well as

many levels of social justice/ multicultural educators (see, for example, Banks, 1999),

this survey was a tool in discerning what beliefs and practices these teachers associated

with social justice. The survey included items that were closely associated with the

themes from the literature that represented traditional SJE beliefs as well as those

representing support for ABR. For example, the first portion asked the respondent to rank

items as far as their beliefs about social justice. Items like "I can learn equally from my

students" and "the experiences of my students should be an essential part of my

curriculum" were included to represent typical SJE beliefs, whereas items like "a main

goal of my teaching is to make students feel good about themselves" and "curriculum

provided by companies such as Pearson and Houghton-Mifflin are successful in adapting

to social justice pedagogies" were included to represent positions that are often criticized

by social justice educators and researchers. Based on the results, the interview questions

were shaped to gain the fullest understanding of each individual's perceptions of SJE and

how they engaged in discourses surrounding their personal definition of SJE in their

classrooms.

Based on my own definition, the literature, and personal communications, I

categorized the survey into broader topics (see Appendix D), which were used to code

data collected in the interviews. Respondents did not see this version of the survey, as it

was strictly meant for coding purposes. However, responses on the survey were used to

further inform my understanding of the beliefs and practices of my two participants and

allowed me to refine my interview protocol.

Researcher Positionality

The decision to look at how educators are influenced by the competing pressures

of ABR and social justice principles emerged largely as part of my own disenchantment

with teaching in public schools prior to the implementation of RTTT. As a New York

City public school teacher tasked with ensuring that my tenth grade students passed the

Global History Regents exam, I routinely felt torn between the need to provide my

students with culturally relevant material and the need to plow through the required

curriculum. Although I was not subjected to the current teacher evaluation system, I

entered my doctoral program concerned by the manner in which policy decisions tied to

standardized testing were influencing and narrowing the classroom curriculum. While my

concern over this has grown, I existed largely outside of the experiences of the teachers I

spoke with, as I now work in an independent school. Although I did teach students in grades seven and eight English Language Arts classes throughout the study, my students did not take high-stakes standardized tests and my annual evaluations were in no way tied to these tests. Additionally, my curriculum was not impacted by other ABR measures, such as CCSS.

However, like Ruth Frankenberg in her study of white women stated, I did not adopt or maintain, "the traditionally distant, apparently objective, and so-called blank-faced research persona", but allowed my interviewees to see that I was involved in the questioning process and shared of myself and my history where it was necessary and appropriate for building the relationships needed to conduct this type of research (Frankenberg, 1993, p. 30-31). Frankenberg's decision to be an active participant was based on a desire to lessen the power differential between interviewer and interviewee, to recognize that no presentation of self is neutral, and to lessen the negative relations established when one asks someone else to provide intimate or telling information without being willing to reciprocate (Frankenberg, 1993, p. 31). All of these motivations were similarly important in my research. Try as I might, my identity as a female doctoral candidate, as a former public school and current private school educator, and as an individual with strong feelings about the issues that I was researching could not be hidden. However, it was essential to ensure that my personal identity did not become the guiding force of the interviews; thus, I did not share unsolicited information or information that would unduly influence responses. For example, I did not share how I

defined a social justice educator without first eliciting this information from my interviewee so as to not cause them to change their definition to align with my own.

Data Collection

In order to gain the fullest possible picture of the discourses engaged by social justice educators working in the context of ABR, I conducted extended interviews with two participants. Based on my pilot research, I believed that this would provide me with sufficient information to address each of my research questions and to adequately understand what was occurring in two very different contexts within the same state (Trainor, 2013). These were in-depth interviews, which were "conversational, lengthy, and interactive exchange[s] of ideas, during which the research works to develop a close relationship with participants so that responses are deep and meaningful" (Trainor, 2013). I used semi-structured, open-ended interview questions based off of an interview protocol that had been previously tested during a pilot study to pull out relevant details and expansive explanations (Creswell, 2007; Trainor, 2013). I made the decision to only use interviews because I was attempting to study a phenomenon within a very specific, hard to find subset of teachers. The focus was not on the actual behaviors of the teachers but rather their discourses surrounding SJE within the current ABR policy context and their self-reported practices.

These interviews were conducted either over the phone, face-to-face, or via online video conferencing tools, depending on the location and availability of the interviewee. E-mail was also be used for the exchange of documents and scheduling. Several recent reviews and studies found that e-mail can be an effective qualitative research method,

especially when working with geographically dispersed participants who have varying familiarity with other online technologies (i.e. the participant may not be comfortable with using Skype but wants to provide video information through e-mail attachments), or when the researcher desires to collect certain textual information (i.e. lesson plans, images) (Salmons, 2012; Meho, 2006). As part of the interview, I asked teachers to send me documents relevant to understanding the pressures placed on these teachers and how they were successfully navigating or feeling hindered by these pressures.

The interview included questions that asked Jordan and Nicole how they defined social justice pedagogy, how they defined success for their students, and how they felt that ABR had helped or hindered their practices as a social justice educator. Additionally, teachers were asked to provide specific examples, using phrasings such as, "Can you tell me a time when…" in order to elicit more detailed and precise information about what was going on in their classrooms. As a teacher who has experienced the pressures of standardized testing and the competing demands of curriculum and my own personal belief in social justice pedagogies, I was easily able to establish the necessary relationship with my research participants. However, as I had no previous professional relationship with either the teachers or schools in my study and have only taught at the high school level in New York public schools, I was still very much an outsider in this research. As such, it was necessary to begin by building a rapport with regard to these topics with each of my study participants.

Rather than conduct a single interview, I conducted a three-part interview modeled off of Siedman's (2013) techniques for interviewing in qualitative research.

Siedman cautions against having a "one-shot meeting" with an interviewee because it does not necessarily provide the context necessary for understanding the responses of the interviewee (p. 20). Siedman describes the approach as follows: "The first interview establishes the context of the participants' experience. The second allows the participants to reconstruct the details of their experience within the context in which it occurs. And the third encourages participants to reflect on the meaning their experience holds for them" (2013, p. 21). Throughout each of the interviews, I attempted to collect the demographic information (Table 1) as part of the interview, rather than dedicating an entire session to the collection of this information. Any additional demographic information not garnered naturally through the interview process was collected in the final interview, so as to not disrupt the natural flow of conversation surrounding SJE and ABR.

Although Siedman (2013) encourages interviewers to look at context in the final interview, I felt that, in this situation, the context was what shaped both the identity of the educator and their experience of the policies. Thus, in my initial interview, I sought to understand how each participant defined social justice as well as their school environment. This allowed me to frame my future questions and interviews within that definition and context. While I asked my participants to reflect on the impact of ABR on SJE given what they had said about their personal experiences, I also asked them to reflect on their involvement in the social justice community using a discussion of current events. Siedman's (2013) statement that the final interview, "requires that they look at their present experience in detail and within the context in which it occurs," allowed for

this exploration of current events within the context of the teacher experience (p.22).

Since SJE has a social action component, understanding if and how the teacher was

engaged in action in response to current events in education was valuable in both

establishing the type of social justice educator the individual was and understanding what

factors were placing pressure on the educator (i.e. not wanting to incorporate issues they

otherwise might into the classroom in fear of being penalized by school authority

figures). I believe this addition to the interview helped me gain the fullest picture of the

individual as a social justice educator within the context of RTTT.

In using the second interview to study student teachers and mentors, Siedman

focused on asking them what they actually did. He said, "We do not ask for opinions but

rather the details of their experience, up which their opinions may be built" (Siedman,

2013 p. 21). In addition to asking teachers what they did, this was also the interview in

which I asked them to share a lesson plan that they believed demonstrated how they use

SJE in the classroom. I asked to have this lesson sent to me ahead of time so that I could

review it and generate relevant questions related to practice that furthered my

understanding of how social justice educators were functioning within the context of

RTTT. This was also the interview in which I more fully developed my understanding of

how the use of SJE was impacted by RTTT and strategies that teachers adopted to

continue to use SJE even in the face of increasing ABR. This exploration of specific

examples of teacher practice did allow for greater insight. One subject, Nicole, provided

me with access to unit plans that demonstrated her personal beliefs while the other

subject, Jordan, chose to provide detailed explanations of several lessons during the interview process rather than provide a single lesson.

In the final interview, I looked at how the interviewee became a social justice educator. Rather than asking "why" questions, I asked "how" questions to look at events that led them to adopt this particular stance as a teacher. This interview was meant to clarify the statements made in previous interviews in order to understand the individual teacher and how she understood social justice. This was also one point at which I used the survey to help guide my interview. Asking for clarification of or more details on a particular response helped me understand the context of the teacher's experience with social justice. Finally, placing this topic in the final interview allowed me to ask the teachers to clarify any contradictory statements between the survey and their reported practices or beliefs.

While Siedman (2013) suggests that each interview should last approximately 90 minutes to avoid the "watching the clock" that may come with an hour-long interview, I believed that an hour per interview was more suitable for my purposes. I spoke with my subjects during the school year, when teachers are extremely busy with their classes. I felt that an hour per interview was sufficient time to gather the information necessary for my study and that asking teachers to participate for four-and-a-half to five hours of interviewing during the school year would have caused additional problems for the two subjects who did consent to be interviewed. In completing the interviews, each generally took 45 minutes to one hour, resulting in rich data. A factor I had not initially considered

was the pace of speech of people in this region- in even this shortened period of time, I

was able to gather an immensely large amount of data due to the high rate of speech.

Table 1.

Demographic Data

Data Type	Data Collected
Personal	1. Name 2. Race & ethnicity 3. Educational background 4. Number of years teaching 5. Grades and subjects taught (and for how many years) 6. How they were recruited
School	1. Town 2. School type (public, charter) 3. Racial breakdown of school 4. Free lunch 5. Local assessments used (if applicable) 6. Teacher evaluation system used

Although initially the length of the interviews was seen as prohibitive to complete

transcription, the use of selective transcription along with discourse analysis proved

difficult. Initial attempts to use selective transcription left me feeling as if major themes

and ideas were being overlooked. As such, my mother, who has more than thirty years of

experience as an administrative assistant and is skilled in taking dictations, agreed to fully

transcribe each of the interviews. She was introduced to the ideas behind discourse

analysis and produced transcriptions that included notations of hesitations, repetitions,

and other speech patterns necessary to garner complete understanding of the discourses

that were being engaged by the interviewees. To ensure that the transcription was completed in an appropriate manner, both my mother and I individually transcribed the initial portion of one of the interviews and compared our transcription. The resulting transcription was analyzed solely by me and all documentation of the transcriptions was placed in files accessible only through passwords.

In addition to the interviews themselves, Nicole provided me with accompanying documents to further my understanding of the materials used in her classroom to promote SJE. These materials were analyzed alongside her interviews in order to provide additional support for the self-reported behaviors of the teachers.

Table 2 provides a detailed description of what data sources were used to examine the research question. Multiple sources were used to support conclusions in order to increase the validity of these conclusions.

Table 2.

Data Sources

Question	Sources

1. What discourses do self-identified social-justice educators use in describing their ideologies, practices, and beliefs about learning and teaching?
    a. How do these discourses reflect the ABR policy context?
    b. How do these teachers perceive that ABR is influencing their teaching and how is this reflected in their discourse?
    c. How do teachers committed to social justice working in an environment driven by ABR work to accomplish success for students and how do they define student success?
	Initial Participant Survey
	Interview
	Teacher-provided documents

Confidentiality

In order to protect the identities of my research participants, all demographic data collected was stored in a password-protected file. This file was the only file in which participants' names were associated with the data. In all other cases, data was kept confidential through the use of aliases for the participants. Only my dissertation team and myself had any access to the demographic data file.

Data Analysis

Initial data analysis began once I received completed surveys from my participants. Based on these surveys, I had a greater understanding of how each participant framed her identity as a social justice educator. As this is a field in which there are many beliefs and practices associated with a single term, it was essential that I

understood each individual's own ideology. Using this information, I was able to appropriately shape my interview protocol to be in line with those beliefs and practices that the educator identified as part of her ideology.

Once I completed the initial interviews, these were analyzed using a variety of methods. According to Cohen, Kahn, and Steeves (2000), data analysis and collection should occur simultaneously, with the researcher audio-taping and transcribing open-ended interviews; reading the transcriptions several times and labeling the themes; and, finally, identifying common themes between the interviews. Based on Creswell's (2007) methodology, I began by looking for themes that were pulled from the literature, which also served as the basis for the survey that was used for evaluation of participant definitions of social justice education.

After identifying themes that seemed significant based on the literature, I used the ideas associated with axial coding to identify additional themes within the individual interviews and look for overarching themes. This was an organic process and throughout, as different questions arose that I had not considered, I addressed those points. Thus, earlier interviews were continually used to inform later interviews.

In addition to the identification of these themes, I also looked critically at the discourse. Critical discourse analysis can be defined as, "approaches in a wide net of discourse analyses that explore power, domination, liberation, and privilege" (Rogers, 2013 p. 67). By its very definition, critical discourse analysis must address social problems. The competing pressures of ABR and personal ideology on teachers would be considered by many to be social problems. Thus, critical discourse analysis can be a

valuable tool in unearthing the meanings behind the language used by the research

participants. Both interviews and any notes associated with the interview subjects were

analyzed in order to better understand the meanings created by the participants. As

Rogers states, "Meanings are always embedded within social, historical, political, and

ideological contexts. And, meanings are motivated" (Rogers, 2011 p. 5). Thus, it was

important not only to look at what was being said but also the context in which it was

being said and the motivation behind the statement. All transcription was done, as

previously mentioned, by a single individual, after careful discussions into what was

needed to conduct a thorough discourse analysis. This individual transcribed both the

dialogue and any hesitations, repetitions, or corrections in order to allow me to gain a

greater sense of how the language used framed the teacher's identity. In addition, this

allowed me to understand as much relevant context as possible, both in the record of

transcription and in the analysis itself.

To summarize, my data collection and analysis was conducted as follows:

1. Initial contact was made. Potential participants were given a survey. This
   survey was then coded to identify any initial trends or areas for refining
   my interview protocol.

2. Interviews were conducted via phone or in person and recorded using
   audio recording equipment, with interviews for both participants
   occurring between January and July 2015. Video conferencing was also
   used in this process to evaluate the facial expressions and gestures of the
   participant for the interviews that were not conducted in person. Requests

were made for supporting materials mentioned by interviewees in the interviews.

3. Interviews were transcribed as soon as possible (no longer than one to two weeks) after they took place.

4. Early interviews (the first two) were coded using thematic codes within two weeks of transcription in order to allow for the remembrance of qualities such as intonation. The coding focused on themes that emerged from the literature, namely: curricular narrowing; teacher evaluation; validity; social justice; culturally responsive pedagogy; academic press; critical consciousness; pressure. The themes that emerged from the survey were also used for coding. From step two through the end of coding took approximately four to six weeks.

5. Themes that emerged in the first set of interviews were identified.

6. The first interviews were re-read and coded for the themes that seemed to be emerging.

7. The interview protocol was adjusted to account for any emerging themes.

8. The remaining interviews were conducted and transcribed.

9. The remaining interviews were coded as above, no more than one to two weeks after they were transcribed, with the addition of the themes from the first set of interviews.

10. Once all interviews were coded for themes, the transcripts were read

again and the discourse was analyzed using the four below-mentioned

tools from Gee (2011).

Discourse Analysis

After completion of the interviews and initial data analysis, I used four of Gee's

(2011) tools for Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) in order to gain a stronger sense of

the real intentions of teachers in self-identifying as social justice educators. Rogers,

Malancharuvil-Berkes, Mosley, Hoi, and Joseph (2005) explain that, "education

researchers increasingly have turned to Critical Discourse Analysis as an approach to

answering questions about the relationships between language and society" (p. 366).

They go on to explain that the goal of critical discourse analysts is to move beyond

describing and interpreting the role of language in society to, "understanding, uncovering,

and transforming conditions of inequality" (p. 368). As such, CDA does not see language

as neutral but as caught up in the social practices of the world (Gee, 2011a p. 28). Gee

(2011a) explains that discourses give significance to certain things, distribute political

and social goods, and shape identities by enacting certain ideas of what is normal and

desirable. In my study, I used CDA to look at the language teachers used and what it

signified about what was desirable to them in their classrooms and in society. The

language used also helped me understand the type of social justice educator the teacher

was at the time of the study. Some of the items that point to certain SJE identities are

enacting a "blaming the victim" identity for historically marginalized students as related

to school failure; focusing discourse on policy on the impact on teachers rather than

students; discussing SJE in terms of "heroes and holidays" rather than meaningful change; and ignoring the inequities in power dynamics as part of the education system. These final two items were most significant in looking at the identities of these two particular teachers.

In addition to understanding the identities that teachers were enacting, it was also important to understand that there were risks and benefits of engaging in SJE. Based on the postings made by other individuals in various Facebook.com groups, risks range from poor evaluations to being removed from one's job. Since topics that are related to SJE are often not part of the standard, tested curriculum, introducing these topics in classrooms presents a risk to teachers, particularly those who do not have tenure, and may limit what those who define themselves as social justice educators are actually able to do. However, these same group members report pride in doing what they feel is right, increased engagement from students, improved education in the classrooms, and a sense that they are "making a difference" in the lives of children. The Badass Teachers Association has gone so far as to create "memes", which are images combined with words that share a story, using the hashtag "#evaluatethat" to share stories in which teachers have made a difference in the lives of students in ways that cannot be measured through testing or teacher evaluation systems. In looking at the identities that social justice educators adopt, I thought it was important to explore what Jordan and Nicole perceived as the risks and benefits associated with this identity. I was able to explore this during the second interview, when we were discussing the lesson plan and what the teacher felt she was able to do in the context of RTTT. This interview allowed me to see how these

individuals viewed the risks and benefits to being engaged in SJE, which was also important to understanding how SJE was influenced by RTTT, as I hypothesized that some of the risks were directly related to the pressures of evaluation.

For examining the discourse, I selected from Gee's (2011) toolkit for Discourse Analysis, focusing namely on the Significance Building Tool, the Identities Building Tool, the Politics Building Tool, and the Figured Worlds Tool. As Gee states, "Discourses… are ways of recognizing and getting recognized as certain sorts of whos doing certain sorts of whats" (2011a, p. 38). These four tools in particular look at how meaning is made and how certain ideas are privileged.

The Significance Building Tool. The Significance Building Tool has the researcher, "ask how words and grammatical devices are being use (sic) to build up or lessen significance (importance, relevance) for certain things and not others" (Gee, 2011 p. 92). Gee explains that how information is foregrounded or backgrounded builds or limits its significance. For example, Gee points to the differences in the statements "While I know I did wrong, I am basically a good person" and "While I am basically a good person, I know I did wrong" (Gee, 2011 p. 92-93). In the first statement, "I am basically a good person" is an independent, declarative clause, making it the asserted information, while "While I know I did wrong" is a subordinate clause. The second statement reverses the foreground and background information. The foreground information is what is most important, and also is what can be questioned in typical conversation, while the background information is taken for granted.

In looking at the discourse of my respondents, this tool allowed me to look at what information was taken for granted, what the speaker considered important, and where they placed significance. As this tool is highly dependent on the ways that the respondents use language, I looked at patterns in how teachers foregrounded or backgrounded information. For example, I looked at how they spoke about student success, who they saw as responsible for success, and how they valued diversity in knowledge, culture, and language in the classroom. This became specifically significant when looking at how the racial identities of Jordan and Nicole were foregrounded or backgrounded in the conversation, as well as how pauses in Jordan's speech represented consideration given to choice in language regarding those who were of different racial backgrounds from her own.

Identities building tool. One significant tool used in conducting this discourse analysis was the Identities Building Tool. Gee (2011) states that with the Identities Building Tool the researcher can,

> For any communication, ask what socially recognizable identity or identities the speaker is trying to enact or get others to recognize. Ask also how the speaker's language treats other people's identities, what sorts of identities the speaker recognizes for others in relationship to his or her own. Ask, too, how the speaker is positioning others, what identities the speaker is inviting them to take up. (p. 110)

As an example, Gee provides an analysis of a student of his who is explaining her thoughts on a character in a story to her parents and her boyfriend. To her parents, she states

> Well, when I thought about it, I don't know, it seemed to me that Gregory should be most offensive. He showed no understanding for Abigail, when she told him what she was forced to do. He was callous. He was hypocritical, in the sense that he professed to love her, then acted like that. (Gee, 2011, p. 108)

To her boyfriend, the student states,

> What an ass that guy was, you know, her boyfriend. I should hope, if I ever did that to see you, you would shoot the guy. He uses her and he says he loves her. Roger never lies, you know what I mean? (Gee, 2011, p. 108)

In analyzing the above discourse, Gee explains that his student is presenting two different versions of her identity. With her parents, she uses more formal, "school language" and enacts the identity of "'a dutiful, intelligent, and educated daughter having dinner with her proud parents'" (Gee, 2011, p. 109). With her boyfriend, her language, through the use of the word "you" directly involving him in the conversation and forming the identity of "'a girlfriend being intimate with her boyfriend'", using more social than school language (Gee, 2011, p. 108-109).

Based on pilot research, it was important to have a tool in place for looking at how research participants shaped their own identities and how they shaped the identities of their students, administrators, and policymakers. The formality of the language used to discuss different groups was noted, as well as the way that this language created proximity to or distance from these groups. In addition, this tool was useful in understanding how the interviewee saw her own identity as a social justice educator and how that identity was situated within the policy context based on the language used to discuss policy and teaching. Specifically, I looked for the way the identities of historically marginalized students are formed by teachers. On the survey, I looked to see how the teachers frame their students' culture within the classroom and the types of resources and ways of knowing that they valued. I also looked at the words that the teachers used in constructing their personal identities, the words that they used to describe their identities, and how they constructed the identities of other stakeholders,

such as administrators. For example, I looked at how the teacher built her own identity in relation to her students, colleagues, administrators, and policymakers. The careful selection of words used to describe students, discussion or lack thereof of race, and the way that the teacher described her own identity and background all were noted.

Politics Building Tool. The Politics Building Tool allowed me to look at how social goods were distributed within the context of RTTT in New York City. Particularly, this Tool allowed me to, "ask how words and grammatical devices are being used to build (construct, assume) what count as social goods and to distribute or withhold them from listeners or others" (Gee, 2011 p. 121). Gee provides an example of this tool at use in analyzing a response to an interview question asking a student at a prestigious school if she believes that a student who goes to school in a very poor or "ghetto" neighborhood would have a chance to succeed. The student states

> Not as good as they would in a good school system//
> It depends on—
> I know that they probably don't//
> If they don't have enough money/
> they might not have enough to put into the school system…
> So maybe they wouldn't, they probably wouldn't have the same chance//
> But, I believe that every person has equal chances/
> um, to become what they want to be// (Gee, 2011, p. 121)

Gee notes that this student not only contradicts her viewpoints in her statements, she also uses different types of terminology to discuss the distribution of social goods in schools serving poor kids (p. 120-121). The student speaks with much more certainty when she states at the end that all students have an equal chance to succeed than she does at the beginning, when she uses "It depends", "probably", "maybe", and "might" to discuss the students. The politics building tool is closely linked to the next tool I used for discourse

analysis, the Figured Worlds Tool, and here the student's language points not only to an uncertainty about the distribution of social goods but also to a specific figured world that dominates her thinking in general.

This tool was important for this particular study because both standardized testing and social justice pedagogy ask what counts as knowledge. This tool proved useful in examining how the participants discussed this idea as well as social justice pedagogy itself. It also provided insight into how they felt that the distribution of social goods has been influenced by RTTT, thus allowing the researcher to see how the policy influences what counts as knowledge in the eyes of the teachers interviewed. Since RTTT and SJE have somewhat oppositional ideas of what counts as social goods, I looked for signifiers such as "high standards increase academic success" and "holding teachers accountable for student learning" to describe the way that RTTT and CCSS view social goods versus "critical thinking", "empowerment", and "social action", which are signifiers of the goods that are valued by social justice educators. For example, when Jordan stated that CCSS allowed for "sophistication in learning" (J., interview 1), this pointed to social goods associated more typically with RTTT and ABR than SJE. However, her criticism of testing because it has "stripped the magic out of learning" (J, interview 1) is more closely aligned with SJE. On the survey, I looked at how teachers discussed learning goals, access to institutions of power, and policy decisions.

Figured Worlds Tool. Finally, I used the Figured Worlds Tool to, "ask what typical stories or figured worlds the words and phrases of the communication are assuming and inviting listeners to assume. What participants, activities, ways of

interacting, forms of language, people, objects, environments, and institutions, as well as values, are in these figured worlds?" (Gee, 2011, p. 171). As Gee explains, figured worlds are simplified pictures of reality, dependent on the context and culture into which one was raised. Although they are based on an individual's personal experiences, they are assumed to be typical of society. Gee presents the example of a foreign doctoral student in the United States who has lost her PhD advisor and, in seeking a new advisor who is hesitant to take her on, states that "'It's your job to help me, I need to learn'" (Gee, 2011, p. 172). Here, the student enacts a different figured world than the potential advisor. The student is enacting a figured world where it is the job of the university professor to assist her in learning whereas the professor is enacting a figured world where he is tasked with training students who are already well on their way to becoming professionals (Gee, 2011, p. 172). While neither world is incorrect, the interaction between figured worlds can create conflicts.

This was a particularly important tool to engage because it helped me to understand how the teachers viewed their profession; what typical stories about standardized testing and social justice pedagogy were at play; and how these typical stories and figured worlds related to values held by teachers. Ultimately, when looking at such politically contentious topics as standardized testing, teacher evaluations, and SJE, it is important to look at how people are using language in an attempt to create a certain vision of him- or herself. For example, I looked for the use of words like "progress on standardized tests" and "access to institutions of power" to draw attention to the figured world of standardized testing. I similarly looked for words like "active community

involvement", "student-identified injustice", and "pervasive integration" to look at the figured world of SJE. In addition, I used the survey to look at how the teachers valued policy; how they responded to the importance of knowing student background; and whether they relied on traditional, additive, or transformative curriculum. Whether positive or negative terminology was used surrounding these phrases also provided a great deal of information about how the interviewee felt about the figured world. For example, when Nicole rated her incorporation of student-identified issues of social justice in the classroom as something she did not feel she often did, I followed up to understand the world she enacted around this idea, as her discourse around this topic in the interviews presented a different figured world than that shown in her survey.

Summation

Through the use of phenomenological research, I gained a greater understanding of how the discourses of social justice educators reflected their experiences of the phenomenon of being a self-identified social justice educator in a ABR policy context. The prevalence of ABR in federal policy necessitates that social justice educators ensure that their students are successful on standardized measures of success. However, in order to see how this affected the reported practices and beliefs of social justice educators, it was necessary to look at the discourses that social justice educators used in describing their ideologies, practices, and beliefs about learning and teaching within the current policy context.

CHAPTER 4

CASE STUDIES: JORDAN AND NICOLE

Overview

The experiences of an individual teacher are strongly influenced by the environment. In this study, I worked with two teachers who have had unique experiences in education. They teach elementary and middle school; they work in charter and traditional public schools; and they have personal experiences with education that greatly differ. However, each teacher professed hope that ABR did not spell the end of SJE. At the same time, ABR policies impacted what they felt they were able to do in a variety of ways.

In this chapter, I will begin by introducing Jordan and Nicole, providing information regarding how they teach based upon their lesson plans. This includes a brief overview of the policy context in New York during the 2014-2015 school year. This will help frame the analysis of Jordan's and Nicole's response to ABR. This will be followed by a description of the two schools, West Harlem MS and Lillian Wald Charter, where Jordan and Nicole were employed during the 2014-2015 school year. This context is necessary to understanding the discourses engaged by Jordan and Nicole, particularly the figured worlds that they engaged. Then, I will look at the ways that the environment in which these teachers worked shaped their identity. Next, I will focus on how Jordan's and Nicole's identities as social justice educators were shaped by their personal background and educational history. Finally, I will look at the ways that these two teachers reported

alignment between their identities as social justice educators and the demands of ABR in the classroom in ways that they believed promoted positive outcomes for their students.

School and Teacher Contexts

In this section, I will provide an overview of the school contexts and the teachers in order to frame the rest of the discussion. I will specifically look at the figured worlds and political goods highlighted in their language. When speaking about discourse around figured worlds, I am referring to the assumptions that these teachers made in their use of language regarding the environment in which they existed, the people in that environment, and the things that were important. When looking at the discourses surrounding political goods, I am speaking about how Jordan and Nicole use language to point to those things that were considered important to being successful. These political goods were most apparent when using the Politics Building tool to look at the significance their language gave to different aspects of identity and education/educational attainment in relation to long-term success.

School Context

While both Jordan and Nicole taught in New York City, their schools differed in many significant ways that frame the discussion of their experiences as social justice educators. Table 3 below highlights the major features of the school environments that influenced their discourses and experiences surrounding ABR and SJE.

Table 3

Characteristics of Jordan's School and Nicole's School

Characteristic	West Harlem MS (Jordan's School)	Lillian Wald Charter** (Nicole's School)
School Type	Traditional Public School	Charter School
School Location	West Harlem	Lower East Side
District	District 5	District 84 (Charter); Located in District 1
Admissions	Limited Unscreened (priority given to District 5 students/residents who sign in at an event; then priority given to District 5 students); 2015: 54 seats, 166 applicants	Application and lottery (priority given to siblings, District 1 students/residents, and residents of the NYCHA)
Shared Space	Yes	Yes
Grades Served	6-8	K-8 (location serves K-4, 5-8 housed separately)
Gender	61% Boys, 39% Girls	100% Girls
Enrollment	93 (or 117)*	578
Average Class Size	24 Students	25 Students
Race/Ethnic Breakdown	1% Asian, 69% Black, 30% Hispanic (or 67%, 31%, and 2% white)	1% Asian, 43% Black, 51% Hispanic, 3% White
English Language Learners	8% or 6%	2%
Students with Special Needs	45% or 41%	16%
Free Lunch	79% (2013-2014 school year)	72% (2013-2014 school year)
Student Attendance	90%	94%

Teacher Attendance	97%	Not Reported
Students Chronically Absent	35%	18%
Teachers with 3 or more years of experience	54%	Not Reported (in 2013-2014, teachers had an average of 5.5 years of experience)
Students meeting standards on State English Test	6%	37%
Students meeting standards on State Math Test	6%	41%

* documents published by the NYCDOE provided two different numbers for enrollment for the 2014-2015 school year with no clarification
* * statistics represent K-8 population

Teacher Overview

In analyzing both Jordan's and Nicole's interviews, surveys responses, and lesson plans, their language served to shape the figured worlds, identities, and political goods in ways that built meaning. Their language spoke to their engagement in figured worlds that were clearly shaped by their responses to both ABR and SJE. In this section, I look at the teacher's backgrounds, survey responses, and lesson plans and explain how they relate to Gee's (2011) tools for discourse analysis. In his work, Gee explains that, "A tool for discourse analysis is a specific question to ask of data… Each question also makes the reader tie these details to what speakers or writers mean, intend, and seek to do and accomplish in the world by the way in which they have used language" (2011, x). The language that Jordan and Nicole used was examined using the politics building tool, the significance building tool, the identity building tool, and the figured worlds tool. Through

conducting a discourse analysis of this language, I was able to see how these teachers

negotiated their identities as social justice educators in the context of ABR.

Curriculum

Both Jordan and Nicole worked to incorporate what they saw as a social justice

curriculum into their classrooms. To gain a better sense of how this curriculum was

shaped, it was important to first look at how both women define social justice education,

what they selected as a lesson representative of their identity, and how this played itself

out in conjunction with the figured worlds and political goods highlighted in their

language. This section will use the Politics Building tool and the Figured Worlds tool to

look at the way that certain themes presented themselves in the surveys responses and the

language used in interviews to discuss these responses. This section also uses the

Identities Building tool and Significance Building tool to look at how the language used

by Jordan and Nicole to describe themselves, their students, and their actions shaped the

development of their social justice identities in ways that make their responses to other

issues more comprehensible, which then frames the remainder of my discussion.

Jordan. In completing the preliminary survey, Jordan's definition of herself as a

social justice educator combined statements that were associated with both SJE and ABR.

While research implied that a social justice educator would clearly reject all facets of

ABR, instead, Jordan's responses showed that she continued to value certain

characteristics of ABR even while developing curriculum in her classroom that she

reported supported SJE. While Jordan felt that nearly every statement was significant, the

statements that were most significant to her were:

- that I can learn equally from my students.

- that all students should receive equal treatment in the classroom.

- that community involvement is essential to their success.

- that a main goal of my teaching is to make all students feel good about themselves

- that the goals, both academic and behavioral, set for my students should be ambitious and reflect high expectations, and

- that recognizing differences in my students' backgrounds is essential to their success.

While these statements point to certain aspects of her identity, those not selected, namely, "that curriculum provided by companies such as Pearson and Houghton-Mifflin are successful in adapting to social justice pedagogies" and "that, regardless of how hard I try, I am not personally responsible for my students' success", were more significant when examined in conjunction with her interviews. Consistent with her comments during interviews, Jordan did not find the resources readily available to her to be in line with her perceptions of SJE.

In addition, when asked to mark what she does as a social justice educator, Jordan again selected nearly all of the survey items. Ones that were made more significant by her statements during interviews were:

- focus on the celebration of holidays representative of various ethnic groups.

- "work to" ensure that my students make significant progress in standard measures of achievement

- promote action in response to injustice and discrimination

- add culturally-relevant figures to the curriculum to make my students feel represented.

- model tasks for my students and scaffold my lessons to help my students be successful.

- ensure students demonstrate critical thinking.

- focus on rigorous academics to ensure my students have access to institutions of power.

By applying the tools for discourse analysis to selections from Jordan's interviews in conjunction with the survey responses, I was able to gain a stronger understanding of Jordan's identity as a social justice educator and how she framed social justice in her classroom.

Student voice in the classroom. During interviews, Jordan consistently used the word "our" when speaking about her students. In using the Identities Building Tool, this pointed to Jordan's desire to enact an identity in which she was part of the same group as her students. Although she consistently gave attention to the ways in which she differed from them in regard to racial and socio-economic background, this language demonstrated that she felt responsibility for the success of her students. Her response to other statements on the survey, however, when looked at with the Politics Building Tool, made significant a combination of political goods seen as desirable by ABR and those desirable in SJE. For example, she felt that equal treatment of students and making students feel good about themselves were important, but these are not ideas that are

strictly aligned to SJE. Equal treatment of students is often more closely associated with ABR, although not originally the intention of ABR, according to research.

To further explore the potential overlap in Jordan's identity regarding SJE and ABR, I asked her to specifically define what she thought was the most important element of SJE, and she responded, "I think allowing my students to have the opportunity to impact the curriculum I would say is the most important if I had to rank them" (J, Interview 3). Using the Politics Building Tool, this statement points to Jordan's recognition of the value and importance of student input and voice in the curriculum, a political good closely associated with principles of SJE. However, in using the Significance Building Tool, the grammatical structures and word choice imply a discomfort with ranking her responses as well as some hesitation surrounding her choice. In continuing the discussion of this topic, Jordan's position and social justice identity became clearer when she spoke of her discomfort with holding the power in the classroom. "[P]art of what I find slightly unsettling about my role as a social studies teacher is the fact that I, to a certain extent I am deciding what material is important to cover and what material is not important to cover. And I don't know if I will ever become fully comfortable with that power. Because information's really shaped by a certain perspective" (J, Interview 3). Again, using the Politics Building tool, Jordan strongly points to two key social goods associated with SJE: student-voice and teacher positionality/ power. Jordan reported that she purposefully shaped her curriculum so that her students had an opportunity to share their perspectives and opinions.

Additionally, the Figured Worlds tool can be used to look at the way that Jordan's

statements pointed to her belief in a figured world where certain characteristics in her own identity gave her power over her students. Based on her earlier statements, Jordan's power came from both her position as the teacher and her race. Jordan's discourse reflected her belief in a figured world where this power played a significant role in educational outcomes. In using the Identities Building tool, Jordan's language here showed separation from her students. Although she frequently used the term "our" when discussing her students, she also used language that created a distinct identity in which she holds the superior position of power. However, in discussing her discomfort, Jordan's language pointed to a figured world that imposed this position on her, rather than the position of power being one that she sought or created. Regardless, it was clearly a separation that existed in her reality between herself and her students regarding the curricular decision making and power dynamic, even while Jordan attempted to minimize this separation. Overall, the use of Gee's tools for discourse analysis pointed to language that demonstrated that Jordan felt conflicted by the reality of functioning within a framework where she had to meet the demands of ABR, mostly through the teaching of literacy skills, while also teaching in a way that honored her personal beliefs.

Finally, in discussing areas of continuing development, Jordan specifically mentioned a movement away from what has often been described as the heroes and holidays version of SJE. "I really thought about but never really [was] able to take the time to truly and authentically integrate it [student's culture] and not just have it be as a one-off, small type of celebration kind of thing" (J, Interview 3). By applying the Politics Building tool, Jordan used language here associated strongly with SJE, namely the idea

of authentic integration. In her own continuing development, Jordan recognized the importance of continually integrating her students' backgrounds into the classroom environment. In the 2014-2015 school year, she did this increasingly through the use of current events, tying what was happening in modern-day society to the issues that have existed in societies throughout history. Using the Identities Building tool, Jordan's selection of the word "authentic" in describing the way she wished she was able to integrate issues of justice and diversity showed that she did not want to work in or be seen as working in a curricular framework that isolated these moments, but rather, she wished to incorporate them in meaningful ways. A distinct part of her identity as a social justice educator was a desire to authentically include diversity. What was not stated here, however, was what prevented her from being able to do this. Based on her other statements regarding the curriculum, I was able to imply that this was a conflict between her personal desires and the necessity of meeting the demands of ABR.

However, this dichotomy may not have been as significant as Jordan made it seem, as her self-reported teaching practices reflected far less alignment with SJE ideals than her discussion of theory and teaching philosophy and her survey responses. When asked to describe how she incorporated social justice into her lessons, Jordan focused largely on basic multiculturalism, speaking about incorporating current events from around the world. Jordan stated that,

> the ideal is that you're exposing them to ideas and then and you know with each unit, and I usually teach them as units, how do you tie in let's say our unit title is "Conflict and Empire" and we're talking about ISIS and we're exploring their land-grabbing and their insatiable desire for growth, well how does that connect to, mmm let's say, the Mongolian Empire or the Roman Empire… And what do we know about empires and how can we make those connections through time. So

that's how I incorporate current events more to focus on this compare and contrast skill, this, this. Let's try to pull out common themes and threads that we know about empires across time so that we can maybe predict what might happen to ISIS. (J, interview 1)

When I asked about events that were closer to home and that were publicized as having a profound impact on Black and Hispanic youths, Jordan reported that she did not focus on these local issues. Current events were largely brought in as part of homework assignments, while classroom discussions focused on traditional ideas. For example, Jordan asked a typical question, "Do you feel the government represents you," when studying Jacksonian Democracy, rather than engaging local current events to expand this discussion (J, interview 1). Even though Jordan saw discussions of these local events as highly interesting to her students and admitted that her students were most engaged in learning when they had the opportunity to discuss examples of injustice in their live and communities and explore those ideas, she did not focus on this in her lessons because it was too disruptive. When asked if the students found these ideas engaging, she responded,

> Yes, too much so. But yes they do, they're like, "Oh that reminds me of…." It's hard to keep the lessons paced if you entertain every connection. So we ask students to talk to each other, ask students to write their observations and their reactions down. We try to incorporate as much of that as possible so they feel like they're getting what they're thinking out in some way. (J, interview 2)

Unlike in her other conversations surrounding her students, where she consistently used inclusive vocabulary such as "we" and "our", Jordan's statements regarding curricular engagement and topics of study frequently utilized "othering" vocabulary that placed her students at a distance from her and frequently devalued their experiences. She spoke of their limited perspectives and self-esteem, narrow-mindedness, and narrow-sightedness

(J, interview 1). In these moments, although Jordan identified as a social justice educator, her language did not reflect that identity; in fact, it reflected the opposite ideas, a dangerous blaming of her students for their situation and poor performance that is all too often witnessed in schools serving Black and Hispanic youth, and particularly in white educators working in those schools. Thus, although Jordan self-identified as a social justice educator, her actual teaching practices, whether through personal choice or because of the pressure she felt to prepare students for a test, did not reflect a social justice mindset. Moreover, it is not clear that her students would have seen her as engaging in SJE, as it would seem that the discussion of their identities and experiences were at least limited, if not devalued, in the classroom.

Jordan also provided a lesson plan that she felt exemplified a social justice lesson. Created in collaboration with an arts group that came into her school, the lesson focused on the lyrics of two songs, "Where is the Love," by The Black Eyed Peas, and "One Love," by Bob Marley. In this lesson, students were asked to think about social issues in their community and how these two songs discussed social issues. While the questions asked delved into some important aspects of social justice, such as asking students, "Are there things you would like to change or see changed in your community/ the world?" and, "Why is this issue important to you?," the portion of the lesson dedicated to students sharing about why they felt these issues were important to them and how they were affected by them was only five minutes in length. The majority of the lesson focused on identifying issues and analyzing the song lyrics. While an interesting approach, student voice was minimized. In addition, the focus seemed to be on the analysis of song lyrics,

even when asking students what connections they could make to those lyrics. The lesson also assumed that students would make connections to the lyrics. Although this lesson had preliminary aspects of SJE, it did not delve into the issues students identified. This lesson was one of a series of six, so there may have been more opportunities in future for greater exploration of student-identified issues, but this particular lesson did not demonstrate that aspect of SJE. It did, however, show a shift away from a typical literacy-based social studies lesson that prepared students for testing, which means that it could have improved student engagement despite not being far along a social justice progression.

Overall, Jordan had a strong understanding of the theoretical basis for SJE and its benefits. It was in her implementation that she struggled, seemingly focusing more on traditional curriculum and test prep, for a variety of reasons, and falling into traps regarding the education of students from historically disadvantaged backgrounds.

Nicole. In the initial survey, Jordan and Nicole identified the same issues as lacking value in their identities as social justice educators. For example, neither teacher felt that major textbook companies did a good job of representing SJE. Additionally, both teachers took personal responsibility for the success of their students, whereas a trend in education had been to "blame the victims", associating academic failure on standardized measures of success with factors outside of the teacher's control, such as socioeconomic status and parental involvement, rather than engagement with the curriculum and representation in the classroom. Utilizing the Politics Building tool, both teachers' responses pointed to social goods such as authentic representation as being important.

Their language regarding student success also identified a figured world that holds

teachers responsible for student success. However, Nicole ultimately, through both her

self-reported practice and the lessons that she shared, demonstrated a more clear

alignment with the principles of SJE and a greater ability to bring SJE into her classroom.

Ideas surrounding diversity in the classroom. In the interviews, I asked Nicole to

elaborate specifically on her feelings about the representation of diversity in many pre-

packaged curricula and textbooks. She responded,

> To me, I think there are much more effective ways to write curriculum about and
> social justice in a way that can't come from a publisher. A lot of times these
> publishers send them to schools that are culturally diverse, however, the
> curriculum does not have any representation of cultures, or diversity at all--
> diversity of religion, culture, any type of diversity. So that was why I rated it so
> low. (N, interview 3)

Using the Politics Building tool, Nicole's response points to a social good associated

most commonly with SJE: authentic representation. Nicole recognized that diversity goes

beyond the racial and ethnic diversity that is present to represent SJE and

multiculturalism in many texts. Linked closely to this statement was Nicole's focus on

the development of curriculum for her students. While she was provided with resources

by her school, neither she nor her school saw them as sufficient to meet the needs of her

students. Thus, as will be discussed later, her school provided staff with the time and

resources necessary to development a curriculum that focused on issues facing the

students.

Working collaboratively with her peers both in her school and at their sister

school in the Bronx, the teachers designed three arc units that strongly reflected

principles of SJE while simultaneously meeting the demands of ABR. Nicole shared one

of these units with me. The unit was called, "Let America be America Again," and focused on the ideas of equality and the American Dream through the lens of the writing of Langston Hughes. The Essential Questions, such as, "How do people experience America differently?" and "Who and what is America?" delve deeply into ideas. At the same time, the language of CCSS is interwoven throughout, as students were required to, "examine a rigorous and complex text" and "identify and defend the author's purpose" (Personal communication, March 2, 2015). While students were learning the analytic skills necessary to understand this complex piece of poetry, they were also calling upon their knowledge of history and their personal experiences to look at how Hughes' words were relevant in their lives. The final assessments for the unit strongly reflect Nicole's stated valuation of her students' and their families' stories: students were asked to interview their parents, asking why their family had come to their country and what their American Dream was. The students were then given the opportunity to state whether or not they agreed with the Dreams shared by their families. They created an American flag with the words and images that represented their ideas about America. They were taught to question history, injustice, and the status quo. Later in the year, Nicole taught another arc unit where she gave her students the freedom to explore issues that they saw in their community and world, reaching yet another level of SJE. Overall, Nicole's self-reported practices and philosophy of education were strongly aligned to those ideas that were the focus of her lessons. Moreover, her lessons demonstrated the ability to bring in complex texts and teach important literacy skills while highly valuing the experiences of the students in ways that show that ABR and SJE are not mutually exclusive. This was

strongly in contrast to Jordan's incorporation and perception of her student's experiences, which appeared to be devalued and excluded from many classroom discussions.

In contrast to Jordan, Nicole also identified one additional issue on the survey as being of lower value, "that a main goal of my teaching is to make all students feel good about themselves". Using the Politics Building tool, this decision was significant, as many critics of SJE state that its main goal is to make students feel good about themselves; however, Nicole did not see this as a social good associated with her personal identity as a social justice educator. In the interviews, Nicole stated that,

> I think students should feel good about themselves...I don't know that that's the primary goal that you should use to motivate them to learn about other issues... And I truly believe that it's the education of everyone that will help them understand why they're unique and why their race, or their religion, or their background is so unique and important. However, I think a lot of times schools, the reason I rated it low, too, they disguise their diversity curriculum, with like, oh this is culture night and everyone's going to come and make a dish...And so I rated it low because I don't think that should be the priority, because I've seen make schools take that as a priority and that's what it turns into and they don't have any full integration of culture training, or diversity, or social justice issues. It just seems like we just want our students to know who they are and that will help them become sound citizens when it's really about the learning of others that [results in] a more informed identity, I believe. (N, Interview 3)

Using the Identities Building tool, Nicole established an identity for herself and her school that was distinct from schools that utilize the "culture night" approach to SJE by using the terms "they" to describe the schools that engaged in what she saw as a problematic approach. In contrast, she used "we" to describe her school's approach. Using the Politics Building tool, she again pointed to authenticity in her approach to SJE, using the phrase "full integration", which points to social goods associated with SJE. In using the Significance Building tool, Nicole repeatedly used the word "priority", both to discuss what she thought should and should not be prioritized in classrooms. This pointed

to what Nicole valued in curriculum, namely, as mentioned previously, a full integration

of a wide number of interpretations of diversity.

Student voice in the classroom. Like Jordan, Nicole's ranking of the remaining

statements showed a true melding of value of political goods associated with both SJE

and ABR. For example, she believed in high expectations, equality of treatment, and the

importance of a diverse environment, while she also recognized the importance of

knowing her students and their families and recognizing differences in their backgrounds.

Using the Politics Building tool to analyze these responses, Nicole valued a combination

of social goods associated with ABR and SJE. The first three ideas she selected as

important are more commonly associated with the current enactment ABR, whereas the

final two points are key elements of SJE.

This amalgamation of ABR and SJE was again present in Nicole's responses

regarding her practices as an educator. She valued both progress on standardized

measures of achievement and the ability to question and act in the face of injustice,

demonstrating a commitment to two distinct political goods. Interestingly, Nicole initially

rated herself low in developing a curriculum that allows students to act in response to

student-identified issues of injustice. In her response, Nicole stated,

> We were talking a lot about action but the thing that tripped me up there was "student-identified" and I felt that even in our advocacy unit when we created the unit based on Understanding by Design we went back and forth "are we going to allow them to pick any topic in the world or are we going to tailor it?" And we chose to tailor it and we actually had some strong debate from some of the teachers on my teaching team, like, if we're teaching advocacy then we need to let them choose whatever issue, if they choose gay rights, then maybe it's not too sensitive for a fourth grader to research. So, when I look at the overall scope of the curriculum, I don't know if we're always giving them opportunities to really have social justice issues that they're identifying themselves. I think a lot of times

we present them with ones that we've already identified and I don't know if those would be the ones that they would intrinsically choose to identify with it. (N, Interview 3)

Using the Politics Building tool, Nicole's concern was over whether she allowed enough student voice; at the same time, her statements demonstrated that she thought that this was an important component. This also points to the issue of power in the classroom. Nicole recognized that allowing her students to have the power to make certain decisions was a significant component to SJE but did not feel that her team frequently gave them this power. While Nicole felt that her curriculum did not allow personal choice, she went on to state that she, personally, had made a decision to allow her students to select topics that they were interested in studying for specific projects. This demonstrates a sharing of power in the classroom that allowed for the development a political good associated with SJE. Additionally, using the Significance Building tool, Nicole's feeling that she needed to "always" allow the opportunity for choice was important to her identity. Rather than looking at moments where this had been done and focusing on the students' responses to and engagement with these choices, Nicole instead was critical of her practices. However, in giving her students more freedom, Nicole discovered that "although I was hesitant to do it at first, it actually was such a natural thing that they were interested in, they knew how to draw the line on what was appropriate and inappropriate" (N, Interview 3). Sharing the power with students, allowing them to have a voice in the classroom, and allowing students to identify issues that affect them and their community are all political goods strongly associated with SJE. Analyzing Nicole's discourse with the Politics Building tool, it was evident that Nicole valued and was promoting the development of key political goods seen as necessary to creating successful, aware

students according to SJE principles. These students were able to think about and challenge issues and structures that affect them, rather than simply exist within a predetermined educational framework.

Summary

Both Jordan and Nicole selected items on the initial survey that pointed strongly to a social justice identity that was in line with my own definition. They responded that they questioned injustice, valued the students' voice, and felt that testing was not the best measure of student achievement. However, their discussion around their actual teaching practices, as well as the evidence from the arc unit in Nicole's case, presented two very different pictures. Jordan's practices, as self-reported, were far less in line with the ideals of SJE than her philosophy and discussion of SJE would lead one to believe. Conversely, Nicole's lessons aligned perfectly with her discussion of ABR and SJE. Ultimately, three themes emerged: the impact of the teacher's background on her social justice identity, the impact of the school and community environment on her social justice identity, and her ability to align accountability based reform and social justice education. Each of these ideas will be examined using critical discourse analysis in the coming sections.

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Teacher Background and Social Justice Identity

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Jordan's and Nicole's own experiences with education, as well as with social justice and ABR, shaped their identities and, as will be discussed later, the way that they viewed their context. While both teachers worked in similar environments in schools located in areas where many students come from the New York City Housing Authority housing projects, their personal experiences inevitably shaped who they were as

educators and how they interacted with their students. In this section, I will provide information about Jordan and Nicole's personal and professional backgrounds, including their educational history, family background, and racial identity. Using their own words, I will rely on Gee's Significance Building tool, Identities Building tool, and Politics Building tool to understand how Jordan and Nicole defined social justice, social justice educators, and social justice education in order to frame my analysis of the discourses they used when speaking about the relationship between SJE and ABR. This section demonstrates the profound effect that personal background had on the development of a social justice identity for these two teachers.

Jordan. Jordan had been teaching for eight years at the start of this study. At that time, she worked as a social studies teacher at West Harlem MS, a public middle school in West Harlem, New York. Jordan and I attended the same suburban New Jersey high school but had not been in direct contact in approximately ten years. Jordan responded to my recruitment posting on my Facebook page (see Appendix B), which I had tagged her in based upon her posts on Facebook related to social justice issues. Her responses to the recruitment survey indicated a strong sense of the underlying principles of social justice that I identified through my literature review. Our interviews took place in late January, mid-May, and mid-June, due to the demands of Jordan's teaching schedule. All interviews were conducted via video chat or phone conference.

Jordan grew up in an upper-middle class New Jersey suburb. The schools there are consistently ranked among the top in the state and education is highly valued in the community as a whole. Jordan frequently called upon her own educational experiences,

comparing them to those of her students. For example, she discussed her academic

success as reliant upon her family's support. "I had a very supportive family environment

where my parents would take hours out of their evenings to sit and work with me on

literacy, on math, and I had a tutor and I had SAT prep and I had incredible out of school

support that my students don't have" (J, interview 1). In using the Significance Building

tool, Jordan foregrounded the information about her supportive family. All statements

that she made here regarding the support she received could stand independently, making

it clear that she valued the support of her family. In contrast, the portion of the statement

regarding her students is in a dependent clause, backgrounded in comparison to her own

positive experiences with an extensive support system. This demonstrates that Jordan

valued out-of-school support as key to success, but did not see this as something

available to her students. SJE encourages educators to look more intensely at the in-

school experience, specifically the teachers, resources, methodologies, and topics, rather

than placing blame for success or failure on factors outside of the classroom. By using the

Politics Building tool, it is evident that Jordan associated different social goods with her

educational experiences in a wealthy suburb than with her students' experiences in their

school environment. This tool is also helpful in understanding Jordan's statement

regarding the school context. She said, "So, my ,the community in which my school is

located is one that is um not the most supportive of education or the pursuit of learning.

That being said, my students' parents advocate for their children in the best possible ways

that they know how and they're working in a system that they themselves grew up in" (J,

Interview 1). This established a complicated "us v. them" dynamic that was present

throughout Jordan's discussions. Using the Politics Building tool and the Significance

Building tool, Jordan's speech regarding the neighborhood in which her school was

located as well as the parental involvement of her students' parents differed from the way

that she spoke about her own educational experiences and parental involvement. She was

significantly more hesitant when describing the neighborhood surrounding her school and

the involvement of her students' families in the educational process. In her statement, she

contradicted herself, stating that the community was not the "most supportive of

education", but then quickly asserting that her students' parents did try to support their

children as best they could. Overall, Jordan's statements shaped a figured world where

both in-school and out-of-school factors played an immense role in academic success,

which is contrary to the ideas of SJE and one of the areas of focus of ABR.

In addition, Jordan regularly referred to both the cultural capital and the resources

that she had available to her due to her self-proclaimed privileged background.

> I am very open and forthright with my students. They know I am a white woman.
> They also know that I am Greek, my heritage is Greek. So just because I look
> white doesn't mean that I'm the same as a Russian person, or as an Irish person.
> Everybody has their unique story. I do use myself a lot when challenging
> students' perception of those who are different than they are. As I expect them to
> challenge my own. And I do share with them where my shortcomings are, where I
> let them know that the experiences that the African-American community's
> experiencing right now is one that is very far and different from the experiences I
> had and I have as being a person of privilege. (J, interview 2)

Jordan's positionality in the classroom as a white woman of privilege sets her as apart

from her students, although her conscious efforts to discuss and address this aspect of

herself represent an attempt to bridge those differences by recognizing them rather than

engaging in color blind racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2006). Using the Identities Building tool, it

is evident that Jordan was attempting to create an identity that built proximity with her

students; she did not want to be viewed as a typical white woman but rather as an individual. At the same time, using the Politics Building tool, it was clear that Jordan recognized that there were political goods associated with her whiteness that placed her in an advantaged position, both in her classroom and in society as a whole. Jordan's references to both the classroom to the larger African-American community point to a figured world that does not see the classroom as an isolated space. Jordan was assuming that the current events that affected the larger African-American community, such as the Eric Garner case on Staten Island, impacted her students' lives and experiences. However, despite her desire to be looked at complexly and perceived by her students as an ally and advocate, it was not clear that Jordan's students would see her as a social justice educator or advocate. Her statements regarding the community in which she worked and her statements about her students placed a distance between them and emphasized their distinction.

Jordan's privileged background allowed her to attend one of the top 25 colleges in the United States, according to Forbes (2015). Jordan wanted to attend this college because, " I saw diversity, I saw African Americans, I saw groups of people that I didn't see in [name of hometown]...And when I got there, after a couple of months, a couple of years there, I was disappointed… that the different groups of people that had been one of the attractive forces.., they all stuck to each other" (J, Interview 3). Again, using the Identities Building tool, Jordan sought experiences that would help her gain proximity to groups that were different from her own. At the same time, using both the Identities and Significance Building tool, Jordan's language and the use of the word "they" push the

responsibility for this isolation off of her as an individual and onto society. She was working from a common refrain that this isolation is an unfortunate reality. However, throughout her educational career, Jordan consciously sought opportunities to expand her understanding of and exposure to diverse communities, while she also found that her personal appearance and background made it more difficult for her to find entrance into diverse communities. Jordan's commitment to being actively engaged in diverse communities is reflected in her additional educational experiences; she has two Master's degrees, including one in Urban Education, and served for over five years as the Youth Development Coordinator in her school. Although consistently engaged in practices to increase her awareness of the needs of her students and her involvement in their community, her personal background still differentiates her from many of her students. Whether consciously or unconsciously, this difference creates a barrier.

Development of social justice identity. Interestingly, several of the statements that Jordan initially marked as being key to her identity or practices as a social justice educator, such as a diverse environment, were later contradicted in interview statements. Gee points out in his discussion of the Politics Building tool that contradictions in statements can point to confusion or uncertainty over the distribution of political goods. For example, in response to my statement that many people who live in what are perceived as homogenous communities feel that SJE is unnecessary, Jordan stated,

> If anyone says that about any community I would beg to differ. I think that even if you look out and you see a group of people that appear to be homogenous, either because the color of their skin appears to be the same or their economic status is the same, within that group you will find many different sub-groups. And so, you can really tease those out by creating learning experiences where the participants challenge one another's fundamental beliefs and assumptions. And I believe that

in most communities where there is this pervasive notion of sameness or we are all united because we are like this, I think that in those communities it is even more important to institute a curriculum of social justice education. Because it's our responsibility. So we don't have elements of diversity that the world has, as a result, we are at a disadvantage. So how do you infuse diversity within a curriculum where the recipients of that curriculum all think they're the same. (J, interview 3)

Going back to the Identities Building tool, Jordan once again spoke of diversity within seemingly homogenous communities, much as she had with her own identity as a white woman. This was a key feature of Jordan's identity as a social justice educator because it demonstrated that she recognized that the general perception of diversity as racial or ethnic was not all-encompassing enough to express the true meaning of diversity. Understanding that SJE is not something that works only in minority communities but that is equally, if not more, significant in communities where the majority of the population is white is extremely significant.

Overall, using Gee's tools for discourse analysis, it seems that Jordan's identity was framed by the ways she questioned the system and how it reinforced certain power structures; she worked outside of the standard curriculum to provide her students with opportunities and social goods that are valued; and she recognized personal areas of weakness as opportunities for growth, rather than viewing those aspects of SJE to be at odds with the demands that she faced.

Nicole. Nicole taught for the past four years in charter schools in New York City. Throughout the study, she was employed as a fourth grade teacher and team leader at an all-girls charter school in lower Manhattan, although she transitioned to a leadership position at the conclusion of the school year. I was put in contact with Nicole by a friend who worked at the school with her. Nicole's personal understanding of the principles of

social justice as demonstrated in her responses to the survey were strongly in line with

the elements that I identified in the literature review as being significant aspects of SJE.

Nicole and I met in person at a variety of coffee shops in February, April, and July. In

addition to our meetings, Nicole also provided me with a number of resources used in her

classroom that were relevant to her position as a social justice educator.

Like Jordan, Nicole had a familial background that placed immense value on

education. Through casual conversations, I learned that she grew up in Queens, New

York, but she did not speak about this experience until we specifically discussed her

background experiences in the final interview. Using the Significance Building tool,

Nicole's lack of voluntary discourse on her personal or racial background implied that

these were elements that she saw as less significant in her identity and experiences as a

social justice educator. At the same time, using the Identities Building tool, this lack of

discussion demonstrated that Nicole did not have to address/redress the idea of white

privilege as a barrier, although she still discussed the complexity of black identity.

Nicole's family had a strong background in education and teaching. Her mother

owns a preschool and her grandmother was a librarian, and both of these women

emphasized the value of education (N, Interview 3). Like Jordan's parents, Nicole's

grandmother supported her educational experiences, albeit in a different manner. She

stated,

> my Mom was about social learning. Not that it wasn't about academics, but
> learning to be a good person and making contributions to society. My
> grandmother... made sure I was well-read--like we get 5 papers at home, we get
> 12 magazines a month from all different kinds of cultures, and travel magazines.
> My grandma was a world-traveller, so that type of education and exposure came

> to me from a very young--as a child. And that's what really ignited me to become a teacher. (N, Interview 3)

Using the Politics Building tool, Nicole points to certain social goods that she believed were valuable in educational success, namely exposure to a wide variety of written materials in the home. Like Jordan, this out-of-the classroom experience points to a figured world where there is a balance between the contributions of the family to educational success and the contributions of the school; again, this is somewhat at odds with SJE, which focuses largely on the idea that all students can be successful regardless of home environment. Unlike Jordan, however, Nicole did not bring her personal educational background further into the discussion of her experiences as an educator. Instead, her conversations focused largely on the school environment and how that played a role in her formation. Like Jordan, Nicole also attended a private college, ranked in the top 400 by Forbes (2015). Nicole also has a Masters degree from that same university in Childhood Education. Similarly, Nicole sought out experiences where she would be exposed to social justice issues and conversations on the topic; she attended lectures, took classes, and engaged in community service activities that increased her exposure to diverse communities and introduced her to new perspectives (N, Interview 3). In using the Identities Building tool, Nicole clearly sought to depict her identity in a way that demonstrated that social justice was valuable to her and her development as an educator. Although she herself is from a group that has been historically-marginalized in education, she did not see this as implying that she understood the experiences of all groups but rather she continued to seek out understanding of different groups. Both Jordan and Nicole saw their identities as distinctive and not necessarily representative of

a whole group. In addition, both women placed significant value on diversity both inside

and outside of the classroom.

While both women have similar educational paths, it was their attention to their

personal, racial, and educational identities in their speech that clearly differentiated them

from one another. Unlike Jordan, whose physical appearance sets her apart from her

students, Nicole physically appears similar to many of her students. When asked how she

self-identifies, Nicole responded,

> I would say that I'm an African-American. My family's from the south but it's so interesting. I would prefer to identify myself as African-American than black because I think that black is just such a general phrase and in having friends and in living life there are so many different types of black people. But it's hard because then when you say that, like I have friends who are West Indian, like do they prefer to be called West Indian or Caribbean? What's really interesting is like my friends, I like to be called African American, however, my father's mother is from Saint Thomas which is technically the West Indies but it's like when I say African American I'm not acknowledging her Caribbean descent. So that's something as I've grown I've thought a lot about and met different people. But if you ask me point-blank I would say I'm African American because I think that's the part of my heritage and my identity I identify with the most. I don't know much about my Caribbean heritage but I think that the whole question is an interesting one. (N, Interview 3)

She went on to discuss the problems of checkboxes- what do students do if they don't fit

neatly in one box (Jordan, N, Interview 3)? Using the Identities Building Tool, Nicole

was hesitant to take up a specific label, particularly one that represented a checkbox on a

form. She viewed identity as much more nuanced, for both herself and her students.

Using the Politics Building tool, Nicole's language also pointed to significance and

differences in the different types of terminology used to describe racial categorization.

That she pointed to a preference for "African-American" over "black" implied that there

may be differences in how these labels are viewed, both within the educational world and

society as a whole. While Jordan's identity was framed around the question of how she addresses her white privileged background when working with students who do not share this background, Nicole's discussion of her identity was centered more on the questioning of labels. However, she did not necessarily face the same challenge of having to justify or explain her identity in the classroom, a challenge that Jordan, by her own accounting, faced on a constant basis.

Development of social justice identity. Generally, Nicole's responses to survey items and her follow-up statements in interviews showed a combination of valuation of political goods associated with ABR and SJE. Often, Nicole seemed better able to promote political goods associated with SJE than Jordan, although both highly valued the same political goods. However, as will be discussed later, Nicole functioned in an environment where all of those surrounding her supported and were also engaged in work on SJE. Using the Significance Building tool, Nicole's responses were peppered with the word "we", giving increased significance to the collaborative environment. Based on her statements, Nicole's identity as a social justice educator was framed by a racial identity that did not appear to complicate her presence in the classroom (although, as she pointed out, identity is never a simple idea), by an environment that gave her the freedom to collaborate and re-shape the standard resources, and by a recognition of the significance of sharing power with students regarding academic choice.

Engaging identities. Gee defines identity as, "Being recognized as a certain 'kind of person,' in a given context" (2000). In looking at the points of their identities that Jordan and Nicole viewed as salient to their experiences, it was evident that they were

using their language to shape different identities within figured worlds that placed

immense value on educational attainment. Both women attributed their success to the

involvement of their family, consciously or unconsciously giving significance to the level

of familial involvement in the promotion of academic success. In addition, they both

believed in education as a valuable component to success in life; both pursued advanced

degrees and have taken on leadership opportunities in their own schools. The discourse

that they used around school, both directly and indirectly, viewed educational attainment

as an important factor in success in life, which was a key part of the figured world that

they engaged throughout their discussions of social justice and ABR. However, while

Jordan discussed her privileged background in relation to her racial identity, education,

and socio-economic status, Nicole did not engage with any of these factors. Nicole's

privilege in the form of educational experiences was not given significance in her

conversations. Jordan's feelings of privilege were a much more salient component of her

identity. With regard to race, both women discussed their racial identities, but Jordan

discussed her racial identity in the context of the classroom and how it might

problematize her position as a social justice educator. Nicole's discussion of race only at

my prompting gave it less significance in her identity; additionally, Nicole's discussion

of her racial identity was situated largely outside of the classroom. She confronted the

issue of multiple racial identities in her students, but did not delve into how this was

representative of a political good that privileged those with a single racial identity.

Overall, Jordan gave much greater attention to different aspects of her identity and how

they impacted her in the context of the classroom, whereas Nicole was more apt to discuss her identity in the larger world rather than the classroom.

Environment and Social Justice Identity

While Jordan and Nicole both worked in New York City, their school environments differed drastically. Jordan worked in a traditional public school encumbered by the need for her students to pass high-stakes, standardized tests. Nicole worked in a charter school that deemphasized the significance of testing and focused instead on engagement and growth. The differences between the two schools are further outlined in Table 1, found on page_____. These differences in environment affected how the teachers taught and thus how their identities developed. In this section, I will use critical discourse analysis to look at the ways that each teacher's identity was influenced by the curricular narrowing, pressure, and support systems present or absent in her school environment. Additionally, I will look at how their discourses pointed to certain figured worlds that supported their identities as social justice educators. . Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, and Cain (1998) states that figured worlds are, "A socially and culturally constructed realm of interpretation in which particular characters and actors are recognized, significance is assigned to certain acts, and particular outcomes are valued over others" (p. 52). Using both the Politics Building tool and the Figured Worlds tool, this allowed me to see what assumptions these individual teachers were making about what they saw as valuable in their educational world and what they took for granted as beyond their control.

Curricular Narrowing and School Environment

In discussing curriculum with Jordan and Nicole, both teachers felt that they had a great deal of freedom over what they taught and how they taught it. Jordan felt that she had notably altered the curriculum for her students by adjusting her teaching from chronological to thematic units, allowing for more opportunities to explore connections between historical and current events. Nicole spoke frequently of the arc units developed by her school and their sister school. Neither woman directly referenced that ABR had narrowed their curriculum, which was significant, as this is a point that many critics of ABR and proponents of SJE emphasize in their research. In fact, they both hailed CCSS as improving attention to critical thinkings skills, a common political good referenced in conjunction with ABR. While neither teacher directly mentioned curricular narrowing, Jordan's responses included several clear examples of curricular narrowing. This section utilizes the Politics Building, Significance Building and Figured World tools to look at the ways that curricular narrowing were present in Jordan's discourse surrounding her classroom, even though she did not recognize it, and how, conversely, Nicole did not experience this phenomenon. Then, it examines how this points to the impact of the school environment on the discourses on figured worlds surrounding curricular development.

Jordan. Jordan teaches social studies, which she states is the only untested subject in middle school (Jordan, personal communication, June 22 2015). While she feels that this gives her a level of freedom that is not present in tested subjects, such as English Language Arts and mathematics, she still teaches "social studies with a literacy focus" (J., Interview 1). Based on the state standards, students need to be able to

complete certain tasks, such as citing evidence in their written work. Although there is no

high-stakes testing associated with the social studies class, Jordan's students must

complete a state-mandated Document Based Question (DBQ) at the end of the school

year as part of the performance assessments for each subject area. Jordan does not control

the content of the DBQ and stated that,

> The interesting thing about the DBQs is that the content is not as important, let's say, as the literacy skills. They're not testing the child's ability to make connections to history; they're testing the child's ability to make connections within documents and across documents. It's a literacy exam…Even if you look on the rubric, students who cite outside information, they're not even expecting students to be able to cite historical evidence to support their claims if the historical evidence is not already in the documents or the background… So the test has all of the information that you need. You just have to know how to read these documents; you have to know how to break them down; you have know how to analyze them. (J, interview 2).

Although Jordan is not a literacy teacher, she must teach literacy skills in order to ensure

her students' success. While she still feels that she has more flexibility as far as what

content she can teach, she must shape that content in order to teach her students specific

literacy skills.

Using the Significance Building tool, it is important to acknowledge that Jordan

did not give any attention to the idea of curricular narrowing. While she repeatedly

mentioned the need to teach literacy skills and pointed to the fact that her evaluation as a

teacher was tied to an exam that looked at literacy rather than content knowledge, it is

significant that her discourse largely emphasized her freedom to teach what and how she

wanted in her classroom. In every statement surrounding historical knowledge in the

DBQ, Jordan used negative terminology, such as "not as important", "not testing", and

"not even expecting". Using the Politics Building tool, Jordan was pointing to a system

that values the political goods associated with literacy skills over those associated with historical knowledge, which is a common trend in ABR. The Figured World that Jordan assumed here was one in which critical literacy skills were more important, in the long term, than historical knowledge.

Nicole. Conversely, Nicole feels virtually no effects from ABR on her teaching. Although she works at a grade level where one would expect additional pressure due to the need to pass a state-mandated test at the end of the year, Nicole expressed that the tests were fairly insignificant in her school.

> So, we have to administer the State tests but like, our assessments, our units are really teacher-created. I mean, they're specific by school, they're not standardized. The only standardized assessments that we do administer are the interim assessments which are created by the network. They are formal exams. They're sort of shorter and then the second one that we took was like a mock-State test. And then we take the data, but the students aren't held accountable to those grades. The data is really just for teachers, for us to look at and look for trends and see how they really support our students to prepare them for the exams. But we don't really make them a big deal. (N, interview 1)

Using the Significance Building tool, Nicole's repeated use of the word "really" foregrounded the factors around testing in her school that she saw as important: that the data is for teachers, that it is used to support students, and that the tests are not a big deal. Nicole felt that she was able to focus on the individual child and her needs. Even when faced with a child who entered the classroom two grade levels behind in literacy, the focus was not on making her pass the test but rather on trying, "to meet her where she is" (N, interview 1). The Figured World that Nicole assumed here was one in which progress on standardized tests was not nearly as important to academic achievement or attainment as individual student growth and progress.

Figured worlds surrounding testing and school environment. In this section, I will take a closer look at the figured worlds that Jordan and Nicole point to in their discourses regarding standardized testing and curricular narrowing. The figured worlds that Jordan and Nicole were engaging regarding standardized testing were clearly different. Jordan was assuming a figured world in which the valued outcome was passing the exam; thus, she focused on teaching literacy skills even though her subject matter was history. Conversely, Nicole assumed a figured world where individual student growth was the desired outcome, which allowed her to focus less on the standardized tests and more on the development of curriculum that engaged her students in ways that allowed them to grow.

Gee (2011) points out that figured worlds are dependent on the context. Thus, it is significant to note the influence of previous results on the figured worlds assumed by Jordan and Nicole. Jordan's school had a 6% proficiency rate on the state-mandated ELA and Math exams in the 2014-2015 school year and Jordan's evaluation as a teacher was dependent on these results. Jordan partially attributes this to the rise of the charter school movement, particularly in District 5.

> I think that our school is very much, um, all the educators at our school know that because of the current climate in our district, we're in district 5, and there's been an influx of charter school in our district, um, primarily because we're the underperforming, the most underperformed district in the entire city and under-resourced, under funded, and, so, the charter tree has taken root in district 5. And so there are a lot of charter schools in our district and as a result, um, the public schools in district 5 have a higher number of students with special needs because those are the students that really struggle to conform to the rigorous behavioral expectations of charter schools. (J, interview 1)

Here, Jordan brings in both resources and school climate in looking at the underperformance of her school. Using the Politics Building tool, Jordan was pointing to

an unofficial and often unacknowledged tracking system that has developed that values certain types of students over others. Not only does she feel that she does not have the resources that she needs to be successful, she feels that her school has a higher proportion of students who would naturally struggle on standardized tests. Here, Jordan was framing her identity as a social justice educator, and as a good teacher in general, as heavily influenced by factors beyond her control. Jordan's discourse addressed these political goods that impact outcomes, namely resources, funding, and student population, while Nicole's did not. However, looking back to Jordan's discussion of her lessons and the devaluing of student voice, Jordan again may be falling into a typical trap of blaming her students and the environment for the situation, rather than taking personal responsibility for the growth and success of her students, which is something she stated was important on the initial survey. Thus, Jordan's social justice identity is once again called into question. While there were clearly circumstances and factors beyond Jordan's control that influenced both her identity and, likely, the achievement of her students, Jordan may have overemphasized the impact of these factors in relation to the impact of the classroom teacher.

In reviewing the statistical data for Jordan's school, she has three times as many English Language Learners and Special Education students as Nicole has in her school. Likewise, Nicole's school consistently outperformed local area non-charter schools. She stated that, "we looked at the data and we outperformed the City, we outperformed the State, but, it, you know, it still wasn't excellent data" (N, interview 1). Notable here was Nicole's lack of attention to the very same political goods that Jordan pointed to: she

does not mention her school population, funding, or resources. Using the Figured Worlds tool, Nicole was assuming a Figured World in which the statistics regarding performance told the complete story. In Nicole's school, 37% of students met proficiency standards on the ELA test and 41% of students met proficiency on the math test in the 2014-2015 school year.

Again, throughout the interviews, Nicole never mentioned that her school served significantly fewer Special Education and English Language Learners than other local schools. Instead, she attributed the higher passing rates directly to the work being done in her school and the lack of emphasis on testing. This also framed her identity as a social justice educator; while Jordan pointed to the differences in political goods as part of a larger issue that justified her success as a classroom teacher and social justice educator despite low test scores, applying the Identity Building tool to Nicole's discourse points to an identity that positioned herself and her colleagues as the major factor affecting student outcomes, ignoring the other political factors at play. The figured world that she assumes gives significance to the dedication of the school and the network in reaching students, but does not recognize the impact that different subgroups of students might have on those outcomes. Jordan's figured world puts great significance on the presence and academic achievement of students in those subgroups that historically underperform on standardized measures of success, as well as the limited access to funding and resources in her district, another topic not mentioned in Nicole's description of success in her school.

Pressure and School Environment

In looking at pressure, I was curious about how teachers felt that standardized testing and other aspects of ABR, such as the CCSS, impacted the pressure and stress that teachers felt regarding academic success, as defined by proponents of ABR. I hypothesized that Jordan would feel more pressure, as she worked in a traditional public school with higher testing demands than Nicole. This section will look at the ways that each teacher experienced pressure, or lack thereof, and how this represented a vast difference in the figured worlds in which each of these women worked, strongly tied to their school environments. Using the Politics Building tool, I will look at how the presence or absence of pressure to improve student outcomes on standardized measures of success impacted the identity of the teacher as a social justice educator. I will also use the Significance Building tool to look at how these teachers emphasized or deemphasized the pressure they felt in their classrooms. The ultimate purpose is to understand how pressure pointed to certain figured worlds strongly shaped by the school environment..

Jordan. Pressure was not a term that Jordan referenced in her interviews; however, its presence was undeniable. From the initial interview, Jordan spoke about the way that the testing components of ABR removed the "magic" from teaching. She stated that, "the emphasis on testing is detrimental to the learning process because it has stripped… the magic out of learning…[there's] such an emphasis on making sure students knowing exactly how they measure up one standard to the next standard and it has deconstructed learning to a series of steps" (J., interview 1). Using the Politics Building tool, Jordan was pointing to a specific way that policy impacted her teaching. The desirable outcome was improvement on a standardized measure of success, a social

good associated with ABR, rather than the critical thinking skills, which are social goods

associated with SJE. Jordan's identity as a social justice educator was heavily influenced

by a need to emphasize these political goods in her classroom, even while she disagreed

with them. Using the Identities Building tool, Jordan positioned her identity here as at

odds with the policy that she was held to enacting.

Jordan's comments about testing demonstrated that she felt constrained by the

need to meet the demands of the "Measures of Students Learning" (MOSL). According to

the New York City Department of Education, MOSL are part of the Advance program for

teacher evaluation. The Advance program, "was designed to provide the City's teachers

with accurate feedback on their performance and the support necessary to improve their

practice, with the goal of improved student outcomes to ensure all students graduate

college and career ready" (New York City Department of Education, 2015). 40% of the

evaluation is based on student scores on state and local measures of learning, with the

other 60% based on a variety of measures of teacher practice. As a teacher in District 5,

which Jordan identified as the most underperforming district in the city, there would

seem to be constant pressure to improve student scores. Jordan's students mostly scored

at level one and two on assessments, with a level three being considered proficient

(personal communication, January 18, 2015). As a Local Assistance Plan (LAP) school,

Jordan's school is under additional pressure from the state to show improvement in

student test scores (New York State Education Department Office of Accountability,

n.d.). Thus, although Jordan never directly mentioned the pressure, her discussion of

underperformance, the growing number of charter schools, and the levels of her students

implies that the pressures of improving student achievement on accountability measures

is something that is ever-present in her school (J, interview 2). Using the Significance

Building tool, Jordan's indirect conversation around pressure took for granted its

presence and reality in her classroom. As a result of her context, she assumed that this

pressure to increase performance on standardized tests was part of the reality of the

educational system.

Nicole. Pressure was a topic that was mentioned by Nicole; however, instead of

stating that she felt pressure, she pointed to a general lack of pressure in her school.

> We never really teach to the test. It's interesting, I taught first grade last year and this year I'm in a testing grade and one would assume it would be a bit bigger deal. It's January now and it really hasn't been a big deal...Like, good teachers have many sources for information, and, you know, using the data that you're given to meet realistic goals or some benchmarks for the girls, of course, we all want them to do well, but I will say I don't feel the pressure that they must do well, that you must make them pass vs., like, you're a good teacher, I trust you to educate these children. You know, and, even when it comes down to test prep, the test prep is flexible...you need to look at the F&P information, you need to look at the performance on the interim, you need to look at your class, you need to find trends and make small groups based on that... And I would say as a teacher I'm happy that it is that way. Because I think that that takes away the from pressure of it. And I never feel like someone's saying, like, "you must have them do well, or else." (N, interview 1).

Using the Politics Building tool, it is evident that Nicole did not recognize the outcome of

improved standardized test scores as significant or influential on her teaching. Using the

Identities Building tool, Nicole assumed an identity of a good teacher that was not

dependent on student outcomes on standardized measures of success. Nicole was not

evaluated based on her student outcomes, but she did not recognize that this changed the

political and social goods that she had to emphasize in her classroom. Instead, she made a

general statement about what good teacher do and the resources they have, never

identifying that the context of her school might impact her feelings on this issue. Whereas there was an ever-present, although underlying, pressure to succeed on standardized tests in the statements made by Jordan, Nicole directly states that she feels no such pressure.

Figured worlds regarding pressure and school environment. As with the need to narrow the curriculum to focus on the test, as discussed in the last section, the responses of Jordan and Nicole to pressure directly tied into the figured worlds that were being assumed by these two women based on their school environments. Jordan was functioning in a figured world where academic success on standardized tests and other measures of accountability were extremely important, due to the situation of the school. Jordan recognized the political goods that were desirable in her classroom environment, even while she disagreed with them. Her identity as a social justice educator was heavily influenced by a conflicting need to increase student performance on these standardized measures of success while simultaneously maintaining her own personal beliefs regarding desirable outcomes and social goods. On the other hand, Nicole assumed in a figured world where accountability measures, at least those dictated by the state, had far less significance, for a variety of reasons. She did not recognize differences in political goods between schools beholden to the teacher evaluation system and those with additional freedom. Ultimately, she shaped an identity for a good teacher based on the unique context in which she worked, failing to recognize the differences in political goods seen as desirable in her school and in the general public school system.

Support Systems in the School Environment

Both Jordan and Nicole pointed to strong administrative support as essential in

being able to modify their curricula to engage their students in what they viewed as social justice education. A great deal of research demonstrates the value of leaders who understand and promote excellence, who offer opportunities for teachers to receive additional professional development, and who continue to hold all students to high standards (Skrla, McKenzie, & Scheurich, 2007; Darling-Hammond, 2007; Hall & Parker, 2007; McCombs, 2007). Sleeter and Stillman (2007) found that teacher practice alone could not support academic success- those teachers also needed to have knowledgeable and supportive administrators who recognized them as professionals with the knowledge necessary to promote success in the classroom. This section will use the Significance Building tool and the Identity Building tool to look at the ways that both teachers utilized the support systems available to them to develop as social justice educators. It will also use the Politics Building tool look at the ways that these support systems emphasized certain political goods and displayed what elements each teacher saw as significant in their development.

Jordan. Jordan frequently referenced the supportive administration at her school, praising the fact that they allowed her to restructure the curriculum to allow for higher levels of engagement from students and the building of more connections to modern-day issues that the students find relevant.

Jordan saw both her principal and her colleagues as resources, but lamented the lack of time she had to work with them in generating new and engaging resources. "My principal is an incredible resource, my colleagues are incredible resources, but again, to find the time to sit and work with them is rare. Uh, and the summer would be a great time

to do that except in the summer we're waiting for budgets to come out, we're waiting to know what we're teaching, we're waiting to know what our schedule is" (J, interview 1). Jordan recognized the value of collaboration, particularly in gaining the different perspectives necessary to develop a rich social justice program, but time constraints were a constant reality. Applying the Politics Building tool, Jordan's discourse revealed that she considered collaboration was a valuable political good, but, as a result of the environment in which she worked, Jordan did not have the time to collaborate. Jordan also recognized that the value she placed on creating these resources was not necessarily shared by her colleagues. "I don't know if all of my colleagues have this perspective, or the same perspective, but we all see what's going on with the charter world and we all see what the effect is in our school, our small community and we're working our hardest to give our children, our students, the best possible opportunity" (J, interview 1). In this context, Jordan also engaged in politics building and significance building. Her repeated use of the word "our" to refer to her students positions her in a place of responsibility-- these students belonged to her and she was directly responsible for their success. Simultaneously, Jordan engaged in politics building, providing a similar insight as previously mentioned into what counts as success in her figured world. Jordan saw academic achievement as the road to her personal success, but here she stated that she wished to give her students the best possible opportunity. Empowerment, a social good aligned with SJE, was valued by Jordan more highly than achievement on standardized tests.

As mentioned in the section on pressure, the political goods associated with the

traditional public versus charter issue again came into play in Jordan's frame of what allowed her to provide that opportunity. As RTTT funding was directly linked to an increase in the number of charter schools, this is one way that Jordan saw a profound effect on her students and her ability to promote success in them. Jordan reported a struggle to find time to collaborate with colleagues, feeling that although she had a supportive administration, this was really an independent task. Using the Identities Building tool, Jordan again pointed to an identity as a social justice educator that was heavily influenced by the political and social context in which she was employed; she repeatedly mentioned factors that were beyond her control, foregrounding these factors as significant in both her identity and her success as an educator.

Nicole. Nicole spoke of both the support of the administrators in her school and of the network, which allowed her to collaborate with the teachers at her sister school in order to develop rich arc units to engage the students in analysis of complex texts. However, unlike Jordan, throughout the year, Nicole was provided with numerous supports, from an ELA coach to common planning time.

> I think we have so much support this year with the lesson arc. Our elementary school in the Bronx planned the first "Ain't I a woman" and we planned Langston Hughes and then the next one on March 5th we're going to plan it together. And they even allowed the teachers from the Bronx to come in in-service for a day and we're going to go the Bronx. So, I think in terms of support, I think that that's what has made us so successful--it's so many great minds planning, reflecting constantly about what we teach. And, also, bringing in different perspectives. (N, interview 1)

Here, Nicole engaged in both politics building and identity building. She directly stated that support had helped her success, making this a political good necessary for SJE. With the increased flexibility of being part of a charter network, Nicole was able to not only

collaborate with colleagues in a different school to develop several units, she was also given the time to visit that school. However, Nicole did not recognize that these supports were a result of her context. In framing her identity as a social justice educator, she relied on collaboration, supportive colleagues, and diverse perspectives. Her identity, and her success, was dependent on this collaboration and support. This support was something that Jordan both desired and did not have access to as a result of the differing school environments.

Politics building and significance building related to support and school environment. While both Jordan and Nicole felt that they had a supportive administration, different constraints also existed that played a significant role in the effectiveness of collaborative efforts. Jordan felt that, although some of her colleagues might share her opinions, she was essentially left to work on her own. Looking at the Significance Building tool, she frequently used the word "I" when discussing the development of ideas and resources, positioning the support as outside of the actual development of her curriculum. Although she was appreciative of the flexibility accorded to her, which allowed her to bring in more of her ideas, to reshape lessons as needed, and to explore topics in different ways, she also lacked time to work with others who may have been able to bring additional ideas and perspectives to the table. Jordan recognized that time was a political good that was not present in her school context. Conversely, Nicole pointed directly to the value of working with those with different perspectives. In contrast to Jordan, she used "we" throughout her discussion of curriculum development, directly pointing to the value of collaboration and collaborative efforts. Thus,, the

availability of collaborative work time shaped both the curriculum and identities of these educators.

Additionally, engaging the Politics Building Tool along with the Significance Building Tool, the choice to point directly to different perspectives demonstrated both their value to Nicole and a connection to a core social good associated with SJE. Jordan also valued different perspectives, but without the collaborative environment available to Nicole, she did not have the time necessary to find and develop resources that incorporated as many perspectives as she desired. In the initial survey, Jordan annotated the statement, "as a social justice educator I teach about injustice and discrimination in all forms," with the words, "I wish I did", adding that she tried to at minimum incorporate those, "forms that affect my students". These annotations foregrounded the significance of different perspectives in Jordan's understanding of political goods. In her interviews, Jordan spoke about the need to develop all of her resources independently to make the points that she wanted in her classroom, which was a time-consuming process. Like Nicole, Jordan gave significance to a core social good associated with SJE in her statements, but her context limited her ability to incorporate these ideas in the way that she desired.

Alignment of Accountability Based Reform and Social Justice Identity

This section will examine the ways that both Jordan and Nicole found alignment between the demands of ABR and their social justice identities. I will begin by providing the policy context in New York at the time of the interviews. This is followed by an

analysis of the language used by Jordan and Nicole when discussing CCSS and recent accountability based reforms. I conclude that both educators saw no real conflict between CCSS and their social justice identity but were highly critical of standardized testing.

Policy Context in New York

New York State does not allow districts to create their own instruments for evaluation but instead allows them to select from a list of state-approved standardized measures for assessment, which is used alongside the state exams to evaluate teachers and students. New York State's Engage^{NY} system also used the Danielson Teacher evaluation framework in combination with these state tests and locally selected measures to evaluate teachers (New York State Department of Education, 2013). This locally selected measure is also referred to as the Measure of Student Learning (MOSL). Student growth, which is worth 40%, was determined using the state tests for the subject matter and another measure from the approved list created by the state. Each individual district selected a different measure from the list of state-approved measures for their locally-selected measure (New York State Education Department, 2012). Other measures of teacher effectiveness, including the Danielson Framework for evaluation, accounted for 60% of the evaluation. Figure 1 demonstrates the characteristics that were considered important for teacher evaluation. The teacher had the option to have one formal evaluation and at least three informal evaluations or at least six informal evaluations along with the mandatory initial planning conference and summative end-of-year conference to determine his or her effectiveness (United Federation of Teachers, 2013). Charter schools in New York State must still administer the state assessments in English

Language Arts, Mathematics, and Science, but they do not have to create student learning objectives (SLOs) or measure growth using MSOLs. Lillian Wald Charter in utilized the Northwest Evaluation Association Measures of Academic Progress as well as internally developed assessments throughout the year to monitor student progress.

During the 2014-2015 school year, in which these interviews were conducted, New York was using state-mandated standardized tests for teacher evaluations in English Language Arts and Mathematics in grades four through eight. In other grades, to meet the requirements, teachers had to demonstrate student growth and create objectives and instruments for measuring this growth. For teachers outside of grades four through eight ELA and mathematics, student growth was measured using SLOs, which were specific and measurable goals based on the available data on previous student learning. They were established at the beginning of the school year and were measured at the end of the course using the MOSL. This system was modified before the start of the 2015-2016 school year, decreasing the number of components used for evaluation from the Danielson Framework from twenty-two to eight, implementing additional conferences regarding observations, and adding additional observation options for those teachers effective or highly effective (New York City Department of Education, 2015a).

Figure 1. Components of New York State Teacher Evaluation (United Federation of Teachers, 2013)

Common Core and Social Justice Education

Common Core State Standards (CCSS) are one of the more recent educational

developments that have emerged as a piece of ABR. According to the Chief Council of

State School Officers (CCSSO) and the National Governors Association Center for Best

Practices (NGA Center),

> The Common Core is a set of high-quality academic standards in mathematics
> and English language arts/literacy (ELA). These learning goals outline what a
> student should know and be able to do at the end of each grade. The standards
> were created to ensure that all students graduate from high school with the skills
> and knowledge necessary to succeed in college, career, and life, regardless of
> where they live. (2016)

Based on this description, the CCSS highlight social goods that are highly aligned with

those valued by ABR than by SJE. As such, I hypothesized that social justice educators

would be critical of CCSS, due to their link to testing and the reported curricular

narrowing that has occurred since their implementation in many schools, particularly

underperforming schools. However, both Jordan and Nicole strongly supported the ideas

behind CCSS, directly referencing social goods that I associated with ABR. In using the

Politics Building tool, I stated that I would be looking at the different social goods

signified by typical phrases. Social goods related to CCSS tend to be related to statements

such as "high standards increase academic success" and "holding teachers accountable

for student learning", whereas "critical thinking", "empowerment", and "social action"

are signifiers of the goods that are valued by social justice educators. As previously

mentioned, both Nicole's and Jordan's discourses demonstrated that they valued all of

these social goods, giving them all political significance in their classrooms. This section

will discuss the ways that each teacher navigated the maintenance of her personal identity

and belief in SJE while valuing specific aspects and political goods associated with ABR, such as rigor and teacher guidance.

Jordan. While Jordan was extremely critical of the testing component associated with RTTT, she was supportive of the standards themselves, stating, "I'm much more a facilitator than a holder of knowledge. So the environment holds the information, the knowledge and my role is to teach students how to access, evaluate and use that information they can find…. that's the beauty of the common core is that it allows for that kind of sophistication in in learning" (J, interview 1). Using the Politics Building tool, Jordan's statement pointed to the importance of CCSS in allowing flexibility and increasing student independence in the classroom. However, the ability to evaluate information and positioning the teacher as a facilitator rather than a power-figure, allowing students to hold power in the classroom are both social goods associated with SJE. Jordan's statements pointed to an identity as a social justice educator where she valued a balance of power and the presence of student voice, but her identity was heavily framed by her context, which included negotiation of the CCSS and accountability measures.

While Jordan saw value in the CCSS, she was extremely critical of the testing components of recent ABR legislation, stating that, "the emphasis on testing is detrimental to the learning process because it has stripped, in my perception, it has stripped the magic out of learning," and that, "there's such an emphasis on data these days in our schools, ah, and such an emphasis on making sure students knowing exactly how they measure up one standard to the next standard and it has deconstructed learning

to a series of steps" (J, interview 1). Jordan's discourse revealed that the testing associated with RTTT and the benchmarks associated with CCSS were viewed distinctly. Jordan saw different political goods associated with the CCSS and with standardized testing; she valued those political goods that she felt increased her ability to incorporate different perspectives and hear her students voices while she devalued the emphasis on data, viewing the "magic of learning" as far more important. In her both of her responses, Jordan assumed a figured world where the goal of education is to be "magical", to allow students to think, explore, and discuss. In looking at the political goods associated with SJE, these goods are far more in line with the identity of a social justice educator. Jordan perceives thinking and student empowerment as vital, particularly evident in the statement that she is a facilitator of knowledge, rather than the provider of knowledge.

Jordan's discourse also revealed that she felt that her own teachers would have benefited from CCSS; despite having attended a school that was consistently ranked among the top in the state without these standards. She felt that her education lacked discussion, focusing instead on lecture, and that she was dependent on her parents and tutors for providing her with the opportunity to think about and explore ideas in the way that she perceived CCSS allowed her students to think and explore in her classroom (J, interview 1). Earlier, using the Politics Building tool, I stated that this, in conjunction with statements regarding the school community, demonstrated that Jordan viewed out-of-school support as a political good essential to school success, assuming a figured world where home environment, parental support, and the school context were all responsible for student outcomes. However, Jordan's discourse surrounding the

hypothetical impact that she felt CCSS would have had on her own education assumes a different valuation of political goods and figured worlds. She said that, "the beauty of the common core is that it allows for that kind of sophistication in in learning that I don't think I ever experienced…I grew up in a lecture-based classrooms" (J., interview 1). Using the Politics Building tool, Jordan felt that CCSS put the control into the hands of her students in a way that her own education did not, focusing on the political good of student voice, which is associated with SJE, rather than the standardized nature of CCSS. As discussed previously, Jordan valued the development of student voice and representation over her own voice, and she attributed this directly to the use of CCSS in the classroom. Based on her own experiences, did not feel that educators would innately allow for this, but instead she assumed a figured world that put the power into the hands of the teacher unless the teacher was given specific guidelines to do something different, namely, develop skills for accessing knowledge rather than directly teaching information to students. This idea that the teacher needed the CCSS to build this kind of classroom is much more aligned with the political goods associated with ABR than with SJE. Although giving the students a strong voice in the classroom is a clear component of SJE, advocates of SJE would not state that standards are necessary to do this, whereas proponents of ABR do feel this is necessary. Jordan felt that an education that provided students with the tools they needed to be successful, thus improving educational equity, required some level of standardization and teacher accountability to standards, if not to tests.

     Nicole. Unlike Jordan, who liked the CCSS for what she perceived as their

flexibility in allowing her to teach content in a sophisticated, exploratory manner, Nicole

specifically stated that these standards made the content more rigorous, a political good

highly associated with ABR. Even with the differing school context, Nicole viewed the

CCSS in a similarly positive light. She stated that, "my personal opinion in regards to the

common core is that for norming purposes, nationally, I'm a strong supporter. For rigor,

I'm a very strong supporter. I'm a fairly new teacher so all I really know is common core.

So I would say it really hasn't affected--I think one thing that is a good aspect of it is that

it makes it very clear of what you're looking for in students" (N, interview 1). Here, the

language of ABR was pervasive. Although the curriculum developed in Nicole's school

seemed to be more in line with principles of SJE, using the Politics Building tool to look

at her discourse here shows that she engaged in promoting political goods that are

directly tied to ABR rather than SJE. The use, in particular, of the word "rigor" is highly

associated with the political goods promoted by the recent ABR movement.

Like Jordan, Nicole also devalued the ability of the teacher to know what students

need to be successful without CCSS, stating, "I think teachers prior to them did not have

a good perspective of like what specific standards or skills, or knowledge base that they

were really looking for in students. Um, so I really embrace them" (N, interview 1).

Again, this is much more in line with the political goods associated with the promotion of

ABR than with that of SJE. In addition, in looking at this statement, while Nicole framed

her identity strongly as a social justice educator who was critical of mass-market

materials and standardized, pre-packaged curriculum, her language her demonstrated that

she did not think that she was capable of assessing her students' needs or progress

without specific standards, given to her by an outside organization, to guide her in this understanding.

Again, like Jordan, Nicole embraced CCSS while remaining critical of the testing component related to recent ABR measures. In returning to the initial survey, the only additional item on the survey that was given a low value by Nicole was, "As a social justice educator, I rely on tests as the major tool for evaluating students" (N, Interview 2). This was consistent with Nicole's other statements, which valued the development of critical thinking skills and deemphasized the significance of testing in the classroom, political goods more closely associated with SJE. However, as discussed previously, Nicole also worked within a context where she felt virtually no pressure from testing and used tests as ways to evaluate her students' needs and growth in order to develop individualized plans for their progress, rather than looking at tests as the sole significant indicator of either her or their success or failure. Thus, Nicole's figured world of education placed much less value on testing, either theoretically or practically.

Nicole's attention to critical thinking skills, a political good associated with SJE, was reflected in the work that she did in developing "arc units" with her grade team, even while she spoke of the influence of CCSS in their development. These units, which were interdisciplinary units, occurred at three points during the school year. Nicole stated that,"the goal in the unit is to really use the common core standards to promote the idea of interdisciplinary units. So this arc, when my team came together, we all brought pieces of literature that we felt were complex, that were also rich in content knowledge in terms of history" (N, interview 2) . Here, Nicole again combined political goods associated with

ABR, namely through speaking about CCSS and textual complexity, with ideas that come

from SJE, namely rich content that was closely associated with her students' backgrounds

and identities. While both ABR and SJE value the ability to read and analyze complex

texts as social good , the texts that were selected for use in the arc units- "Ain't I a

Woman" and "Let America be America Again"- reflected the student population in ways

that pointed to the political goods specific to each area. For example, the texts were

chosen to allow for authentic recognition and empowerment, social goods that are

associated with SJE, but that they also allowed for the development of critical thinkings

skills that are highly valued in ABR. They did not opt to use any informational texts,

which are emphasized in CCSS, in these arc units as the focal texts, although the student-

research component drew upon these texts.

Nicole also questioned the wiseness of simply engaging the CCSS because it was

what she was told to do.

> One thing that I, an initiative that I've taken on this year in fourth grade, was to use the common core aligned curriculum and really plan them using backwards design, like what are the priority standards. Are we teaching this because they say so? Because in my leadership program I read an article about how a lot of these publishers are pushing out curriculum that is really not aligned. And, it's just, you know, muffled, and turned, and twisted and has key phrases but is not necessarily aligned to the common core. So that would be, I think, the big push. At least with my grade team is what does that really look like? (N, interview 1)

This again points to a difference in context that affected the identity of Nicole. She

worked in an environment where she could question ABR measures and CCSS, since the

desired outcome in her school was student growth. She was assuming a figured world

where teachers have the right to question policy and political decisions that affect their

students and teaching. Jordan's context did not allow for this level of questioning, as she

had no choice- her success as an educator and her students' success was measured by standardized testing. Even where she was critical of ABR, Jordan did not have the ability to reshape her system to the extent that Nicole did.

Political goods and figured worlds associated with CCSS and SJE. Both the political goods and figured worlds that were engaged by these two teachers represented a lack of distinction between practices associated with ABR and those associated with SJE. Both Jordan and Nicole clearly valued the CCSS and engaged in a figured world where CCSS and SJE were closely linked rather than opposed, as many critics of both ABR and SJE believe. Jordan directly stated that she felt that it was necessary for teachers to have the CCSS in order to create a classroom environment where students had a clear voice. Without the CCSS, she felt that the classroom automatically became a place where the teacher held the power and engaged in a lecture-based curriculum. Thus, Jordan assumed a figured world where teachers required outside guidance in order to be successful in promoting the political goods that she saw as essential to strong SJE practices.

Nicole also felt that CCSS guided how she and her team shaped the curriculum, although they did not feel the need to align it to testing in the same way that Jordan did. This was evident in her discussion of the arc units, where she stated,

> So the units, I wouldn't say they were…"highly correlated" [to standardized tests] and we don't feel pressured at all to make them link at all. And it's really interesting because the best teachers on my grade team and the teachers in the Bronx said they have been the best units to teach because, you know, for us, it's like REAL teaching. But the biggest relevance is, I think really, teaching girls how to approach and navigate a complex text and what that means and why complex texts are important. And I think that that's one crucial area where I, as an educator, do support the common core because we are trying to get them ready for college and beyond, they are going to be reading complex texts and they're going to have to approach them with those reading and writing skills. (N, interview 2)

Using the Significance Building tool and the Identities Building tool, Nicole's emphasis on the word "real" assumed a characteristic of what a good, authentic teacher was- one who was able to teach skills without feeling pressure to look at how this would affect test scores. Again, Nicole was assuming a figured world where context did not play a significant role in educational outcomes; rather, outcomes were teacher-dependent.

Ultimately, both teachers seemed to point out that there exists a figured world in which aspects of ABR and aspects of SJE can exist harmoniously. Nicole gave a clear example of how teachers could view both CCSS and SJE as valuable in the classroom. Jordan praised the CCSS for increasing the rigor of the texts and writing explored in the classroom, even while she was more critical of other aspects of ABR, due to the pressure that they placed on her students and teaching as a result of testing. Overall, it was evident that these two teachers viewed at least the CCSS in the way that proponents of ABR originally intended them to be seen, which meant that they were able to maintain their social justice identity while enacting these standards. It was with regard to testing that both educators struggled. Thus, their statements indicated that it was possible to align certain aspects of ABR with SJE.

Summary

In analyzing the discourses of Jordan and Nicole using the Significance Building, Identities Building, and Politics Building tools, it became increasingly evident that context and personal history had a profound impact on the ways that Nicole and Jordan developed discourses around both SJE and ABR. These differences ultimately shaped distinct figured worlds. Jordan's figured world recognized personal background, context,

student background, and the demands of a complex standardized evaluation system as major components that shaped both her personal social justice identity and her success as a social justice educator. Nicole's figured world did not recognize many of these same factors and instead assumed that differing results were dependent on the work of the teachers rather than the school context. This provides valuable insight into the potential ways that teachers who self-identify as social justice educators engage in these discourses in two contexts that, although similar on the surface, in fact vary immensely.

Ultimately, Jordan, due to the context in which she worked and the demands she faced as a result, which were significantly different from Nicole's, engaged in politics building and assumed figured worlds in ways that differed from Nicole. With those contextual demands, Jordan had to work harder to maintain her identity as a social justice educator. Nicole worked in an environment that more naturally supported her development of this identity. Thus, the context profoundly impacted the discourses that these two educators engaged regarding political goods and figured worlds in ways that shaped their identities and their continued development as social justice educators.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

Overview

Through the use of Gee's (2007) tools for discourse analysis, along with thematic coding, the clear emergence of themes discussed in Chapter 4 resulted in several significant conclusions and implications for further research. The three main conclusions that I reached are that personal identity and background significantly impact the development of a social justice identity; that SJE and an individual's identity as a social justice educator are impacted by the school environment and context; and that the ability to align personal beliefs regarding SJE with the ABR context is possible and can be successful in the classroom environment. In this chapter, I will discuss these major conclusions, areas for future research, the limitations of this study, and the implications of the study.

Conclusions

Impact of Personal Identity

Jordan, as a privileged, white female engaged in discourses that established her as different from her students even while she utilized possessive language to discuss her students. Initially, Jordan was hesitant when asked to describe the community where she worked, her careful choice to use the phrase "housing development projects" or "houses" rather than the colloquial "projects" was telling (J, interview 1). Throughout all three interviews, Jordan regularly contrasted her own educational experiences with those of her students, pointing to the myriad differences that exist between the education provided to

upper-middle class, mostly white students and that provided to underprivileged minority youth. However, Jordan's discussion of the community in which she taught and the devaluation of the personal stories of her students was significant in that it indicated a lower level of engagement in SJE and implied that how she wished to be perceived may not have been how her students saw her. In contrast, Nicole never brought up feeling a need to discuss her identity with her students or to justify her presence in the classroom. While she discussed the complexities of racial identification, this did not seem to be a point that Nicole independently thought about with regard to her role in the classroom- she did not mention her identity as an African-American female until prompted by me to define herself. Additionally, unlike Jordan, Nicole called upon her own background, having also attended all-girls schools, as a way of further relating to her students, explaining that she valued the education she received and felt that it was beneficial to young girls.

Much research focus on the challenges white educators face in working with minority students, even those white educators who identify as social justice educators. These educators must first, as Jordan did, recognize the privileged position that their whiteness gives them in life, must struggle with this idea, and must find a way to meld their personal identity with their desire to become an ally for others who do not share their background (Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Leonardo, 2009; Sleeter, 2005). This creates an additional step towards successful implementation of SJE for those who work in schools where students do not share their background. Thus, it is essential to understand the ways

in which who a teacher is, both in physical appearance and in personality and beliefs, impacts his or her position in the classroom.

Areas for further study. Whether or not it is directly addressed, who we are has a profound impact on what we believe and how we enact those beliefs. It alters how others perceive us and how we interact with our environment. While Jordan self-identified as a social-justice educator and engaged in some discourse that built strong bonds between herself and her students, it would be interesting to learn if her students shared her belief that she was a social justice educator. Did they perceive her attempts to incorporate their backgrounds in the same way that she does? Did they view her as a member of their community or was she seen as an outsider? In future research, it would be essential to look at how *who* the teacher is affects his or her beliefs. Particularly in looking at the ways in which teachers are creating resources, the student perspective could be a valuable tool in gaining further insight into these teachers. Oftentimes, how we see ourselves can differ from how we are perceived by our students. In fact, Gee (2007) points to the fact that critical discourse analysis is centered around looking at how we paint ourselves and how we paint others. This study looked only at the ways that teachers portrayed themselves and others within their teaching environment but did not look at how the "others" would portray those teachers. Future research could ask how both the students and the teacher's colleagues perceive the teacher's self-reported identity as social justice educator.

Environmental Impact

In looking at the ways in which Nicole and Jordan engaged their personal identities in discussing SJE and ABR, as well as their discussion of the schools in which they work, several broad ideas were apparent. As expected, Jordan frequently cited a lack of educational resources as a struggle in her teaching community, understanding that resources refer to both physical items like textbooks and experiences related to the social capital that students are expected and need to develop to be competitive in the broader world. Most significantly, Jordan criticized the comparison between her students and those attending charter schools, who, in her experience, had more of all of the resources needed to be educationally successful, as well as fewer of the "problems", such as special educational needs or lack of English language. As Darling-Hammond (2007) noted, despite a collaborative environment and the best intentioned teachers, students may still fail to be successful if they do not have access to educational resources. This came out time and time again in Jordan's discourse surrounding her experience: despite her best efforts to inspire academic press, develop culturally relevant curriculum, and engage the critical consciousness of her students, the lack of educational resources in her school environment had an enormous impact on her identity and experiences with SJE and ABR.

In contrast, Nicole seemed ignorant of the fact that her students, as charter students, were advantaged over those in their peer traditional public schools. Not only did her school provide her students with more educational resources, in the form of both texts and access to social capital, they served far fewer special education and English Language Learners than other schools in District 1. District 1 schools contained fewer Black and Hispanic students than Nicole's school, 17% and 41% respectively, but they

contained 51% male students, 20% students with disabilities, and 10% ELLs (New York

City Department of Education, 2015b). All of those subgroups are known for their

underperformance on standardized measures of success. Nicole did not recognize that,

simply based on these statistical factors, she was beginning with students who had more

social goods. In addition, her school provided vast educational resources in the form of

time and materials. Yet Nicole failed to mention the advantages that her students had as

charter students or the inequitable comparison between the test scores of her students and

those of District 1 students in general.

Jordan understood that her students were placed at a further disadvantage due to

the prevalence of charter schools in District 5, including the colocation of a charter

school in her building; every day her students bore witness to the fact that their very

facilities were not as nice as those rooms and floors belonging to the charter school. In

fact, Jordan's school served significantly more students with disabilities and ELLS than

District 5 schools in general, who serve 19% and 9% of students in these subgroups

respectively.

Nicole's statements about the environment in which she worked ignored that her

students began at an advantage over those in traditional public schools. While Nicole may

have been equally successful working in an environment without level of support

provided at her school and by her network, it is unlikely that she would have developed

such strong, interdisciplinary units had she worked in Jordan's school, with the increased

pressure to perform on tests, the greater number of special education students and ELLs,

and the lack of time available to collaborate. This is an issue that is consistently seen in

studies comparing the success of charter schools to those of traditional public schools-

one of these things is not like the other and yet educational leaders insist on comparing

them as if they were alike. This places traditional public schools, with lower funding, less

flexibility, more pressure, and fewer resources, at an even greater disadvantage, as they

are criticized for not being able to perform at the same levels as the charter schools in

their neighborhoods while serving the many students who are "left behind" by the reform

and charter school movement. Ultimately, Jordan and Nicole had different

understandings of the figured world of education in New York City: Jordan's world

pointed out the differences in political goods in ways that explained her identity and the

need to adapt in much more significant ways to policies associated with ABR in order to

meet the state's definition of academic success; Nicole's world focused on the individual

students and the teacher's ability to shape their experiences in ways that led to academic

success as defined by the teachers and the charter network, not by a policy or testing

system.

      Areas for further study. While charter networks continue to tout their successes

at educating students and producing students who perform better than those in traditional

public schools, research and researchers must continue to look at the ways that this

comparison is inequitable. In looking specifically at SJE and ABR, research must look at

the different levels of pressure that teachers experience in these environments. How is

this pressure manifested in different environments? What complications does it add to

the identity of the teacher? Further research into the social capital available to students in

charter schools and the flexibility of the curriculum in those schools would also be

valuable, particular within the framework of the development of SJE. Another area for additional study would be into the ways that social justice educators who work in charter schools frame that particular aspect of their identity, as charter schools often receive criticism for leaving out certain subgroups of the population that are targeted in the academic research on SJE. How broadly or narrowly are educators in this environment defining diversity? What happens when linguistic diversity and diversity in learning needs are largely eliminated or represented in much smaller numbers? Does this change the way the teacher defines diversity and thus social justice education?

At the same time, it would behoove researchers to look at the ways that the successes of charter schools in integrating SJE can be adapted to the general school population. How can schools create more time for collaboration? In what ways can the curriculum be made more flexible so that it recognizes differing funds of knowledge, can be culturally relevant, and can develop critical consciousness even while adhering to state and federal policies? Jordan lamented the lack of time available to collaborate with her colleagues, but does this have to be a reality? Both researchers and teachers can learn from the successes of the charter schools in integrating SJE.

Discourses around Social Justice Education and Accountability Based Reform

In the review of the literature, the identity of an individual as a social justice educator was presented as largely at odds with ABR; however, the interviews with both Jordan and Nicole demonstrated a much more nuanced and blended identity. Kumisharo states that, "teachers committed to anti-oppressive education face political pressure in the form of public bashing, scrutiny from both the Left and the Right, and increasing policy

initiatives that require substantial revisions in the face of high stakes testing and highly valued 'learning standards'" (2015, pg. 147). He goes on to state that he still has hope that anti-oppressive education, which is one of the many names for SJE, can occur within this setting. While Jordan experienced the very pressure that is mentioned by Kumisharo, she continued to engage in a discourse that theoretically valued the modification of her personal teaching style and curriculum in ways that aligned with theories of SJE, even though her discussion of her actual practices were much less in line with theories of SJE. Without the pressure of testing, Nicole would be assumed to have had a much larger opportunity to engage in discourses tied more traditionally to SJE; yet, she continued to value elements of ABR in ways that were unexpected but perhaps speak to a gap in teacher preparation, particularly regarding teacher ability to identify good curriculum without needing federally mandated standards. Despite their acceptance and support of certain ABR-associated policies in the classroom, both Jordan and Nicole pointed to inadequacy in state-provided materials as one of the reasons that they altered their teaching and curriculum, finding texts that they felt engaged the students in critical thinking, the portion of CCSS that both valued.

Additionally, simultaneously valuing political goods associated with SJE and with ABR may demonstrate the ingrained nature of ABR in our teacher education and school systems. Nicole specifically stated that she has never known anything but the world of NCLB and CCSS. While recognizing that CCSS were all she has ever known as a teacher, she was not able to reflect on her own educational experiences prior to the implementation of Common Core to understand that she was academically successful

outside of this model. Although Jordan had some experience teaching in New York prior to the implementation of RTTT policies, her criticism of the comparative weakness of certain aspects of her own education led to strongly positive feelings about the CCSS.

Areas for further research. While researchers of SJE devalue ABR in general, they do not discount the ability of committed social justice educators to work within the constraints of ABR, such as CCSS. It would be interesting to continue to look at the ways that self-identified social justice educators speak about aspects of public policy. Neither of the teachers in this study wholeheartedly embraced all components of the recent educational reforms, but neither did they reject them completely. For example, neither teacher felt that the opt-out movement, popular amongst critics of ABR and garnering support from 20% of students in New York in the 2014-2015 school year, was something that was relevant in their particular community. How is it that a major movement affected neither school? Was this movement largely centered in privileged groups rather than in historically marginalized populations? What might that imply about the ability of certain groups to act against policy, even when they and their schools are those most affected by these policies? And how do educators, particularly in schools where they are relying on demonstrated growth on standardized measures of success for job maintenance and funding, perceive these movements? Thus, once again, both context and personal background seem to play contributing roles to the enactment of SJE and ABR in the classroom.

Changes in Policy Context

As mentioned in the review of the literature, both SJE and ABR are ever-evolving fields. Thus, it was unsurprising that another change in ABR occurred as this study concluded. Although it did not impact the teachers, who were interviewed during the 2014-2015 school year, it does affect the conclusions made in this study regarding the interactions of SJE and ABR.

The Every Student Succeeds Act. As this dissertation study concluded, a new act was passed, which, according to the White House, is a "bipartisan bill to fix No Child Left Behind" (Whitehouse, 2015). To do so, the ESSA, "rejects the overuse of standardized tests and one-size-fits-all mandates on our schools, ensures that our education system will prepare every child to graduate from high school ready for college and careers, and provides more children access to high-quality state preschool programs" (Whitehouse, 2015). The goal is to recognize the legacy of the ESEA as civil rights law by upholding,

> critical protections for America's disadvantaged students. It ensures that states and school districts will hold schools to account for the progress of all students and prescribes meaningful reforms to remedy underperformance in those schools failing to serve all students. It excludes harmful "portability" provisions that would siphon funds away from the students and schools most in need, and maintains dedicated resources and supports for America's vulnerable children... It also ensures that states and districts continue the work they've begun this year to ensure that all students...have equitable access to excellent educators. (Whitehouse, 2015)

While this new act continues to value many of the political goods associated with former iterations of ABR, such as college and career readiness and rigor, it gives more attention to some of the issues most valued and previously criticized by social justice educators. For example, this new act relieves some of the heavy focus on standardized testing, one of the most commonly criticized components of ABR. In addition, the rejection of "one-

size-fits-all mandates" could allow SJE greater flexibility in schools. While it is too soon to predict the impact of the ESSA on the relationship between ABR and SJE, it would behoove researchers to closely follow the changes in state policies that result from this mandate, focusing on whether or not they allow for increased freedom in the classroom to create curricula that, while still challenging, also substantively represents the students in the classroom.

New York policy changes. At the same time as this federal development, Governor Andrew Cuomo's (NY) task force on the evaluation of CCSS in New York released their own set of recommendations that encouraged, amongst other things, that, "Until the start of the 2019-2020 school year...results from assessments aligned to the current Common Core Standards, as well as the updated standards, be used to guide the process of further reform and to give us a notional indication that we are moving in the right direction, but that these results not be used to evaluate the performance of specific teachers or students until the new system is complete and implemented" (New York Common Core Task Force, 2015). The recommendations of this task force, which were readily accepted by the Governor, represent a strong move away from the requirements of NCLB and a shift in what ABR may look like in the future.

Areas for further research. One of the major differences seen between the figured worlds of Jordan and Nicole with regard to SJE and ABR was the presence of pressure to succeed on standardized tests. As the State of New York lessens this pressure by devaluing these assessments as measures of evaluating student and teacher success, it would be interesting to see how self-identified social justice educators working in

traditional public schools perceive the changes in the pressure they experience. Would these changes allow them more freedom in their classroom practices? Would they be able to develop additional cultural relevant pedagogy? Theoretically, without this pressure to succeed on tests, one would predict that teachers would feel increased freedom to adapt their curriculum. Without the pressure to succeed on standardized tests, Nicole was free to implement a curriculum that valued critical thinking and the development of key skills while still exploring the background, history, and current issues facing her students. Jordan felt much more pressure to teach the literacy skills required to pass the test, and, although she made a great effort to modify her curriculum to allow students to explore current issues while doing so, the pressure of testing ensured that the end-game of her teaching was still focused on achievement on standardized measures of success.

Limitations

As this study was qualitative and included only two teachers, results cannot be generalized to the population. In addition, the ever-changing policy context means that, although these interviews were conducted recently in relation to the writing of this dissertation, the policies regarding CCSS and ABR have already changed. Thus, this study provides a snapshot look at how the policies enacted in a particular school year framed the identities of these two women. As identity is fluid, rather than static, it is realistic to assume that both teachers' identities will continue to evolve as policy frameworks, current events, and other life events change how they view education and social justice.

Although this study originally desired to look at more teachers, a quickly-recognized limitation was that many teachers today lack trust in speaking with individuals who they do not know. I attempted recruitment both from Facebook.com and through attendance at conferences and events; however, neither attempt resulted in subjects who completed the study. In fact, a third subject was recruited at a Rutgers event with the assistance of my advisor. This subject completed the survey, paperwork, and first interview, at which point she did not continue with the study. While I am unsure of why she chose not to continue, her initial interview felt much more hesitant than the interviews with my other two subjects, belying a discomfort that seemed to be a common theme with the recruitment of strangers.

Both of my subjects who successfully completed the process were instead recruited through personal relationships; while this assisted in building rapport, it also meant that I had a more intimate knowledge of their schools, backgrounds, and relationships than I would have with unfamiliar subjects. Jordan, in particular, shared a similar pathway to her current position in the field of SJE and frequently called upon our shared educational experiences. Although this allowed me to have greater insight into her personal development as a social justice educator, it also resulted in certain assumptions about shared experiences and understandings that meant that things that may have otherwise been verbalized went unspoken. While I had never met Nicole prior to this study, I had a strong understanding of her school and its overall goals from my friend, who has worked there for most of the four years that I have known her. Through this friend, I had a pre-existing understanding of several aspects of the school, which allowed

me to target questions to those areas but which also may have resulted in a limited

discussion of some aspects of the school that played a role in the formation of Nicole's

identity as a social justice educator. For example, rather than asking about how she

created bonds with families, I relied on my personal knowledge of the home-visit system,

where every teacher visits the home of every student prior to the start of the year. In both

cases, engaging in discourses with teachers with whom I had a level of familiarity may

have led to certain aspects of their identities being explored in less depth than they would

have had my subjects been strangers.

An additional limitation of this study was that I made the decision not to go into

the classrooms. I intentionally wanted to look at how teachers framed their identity as

social justice educators within a particular context. While I was happy to look at

resources and materials to garner a better understanding of this identity, the purpose of

this study was not to evaluate this identity in practice. Thus, the study is limited to how

the teacher speaks about herself and self-reported practices rather than an analysis of

these self-reported practices in action. That would be an area for additional research.

Implications

As a result of this study, there were four major implications: implications for

research, implications for practice, implications for policy, and implications for teacher

education. With regard to implications for research, the main understanding that emerged

was that social justice educators may be better able to navigate ABR than previous

research encouraged. With regard to implications for practice, the recognition of the idea

that nothing occurs in a bubble, least of all teaching, is significant in understanding the

interaction between ABR and SJE. In the implications for policy, it would behoove policymakers to look at the distribution of educational resources and the need for greater collaboration amongst teachers and schools to promote academic success. Finally, there are implications for teacher training, particularly regarding how teachers are educated about the relationship between SJE and ABR and how collaborative communities are built and maintained.

Implications for Research

The most significant implication resulting from this study is that accountability based reform and social justice education may not exist in practice in the dichotomy represented in research. Instead, these self-identified social justice educators had a blended identity, valuing aspects of both ABR and SJE. Their reported practices, if actually enacted in the classroom, demonstrate that it is possible to engage in high-level social justice education, as defined by individuals such as Banks (1999) and Sleeter (2005), within a policy context that heavily values standardized measures of success. For research purposes, this implies that more needs to be done to study both self-reported identities of teachers within particular policy contexts and teacher practices within those contexts. Many studies looked at identity alone or policy alone, but virtually no studies looked at the practical implications of these recent policies. However, this study also pointed to the difficulty of finding teachers who identify as social justice educators. While many groups exist that claim to contain social justice educators, few were willing to participate in research. This is potentially another example of the impact of ABR that could be further studied: how has ABR impacted teachers' abilities to focus on these

issues? With the many things on a teacher's plate that must be done in order to maintain employment, it seems as if consideration of other educational issues or concerns may have taken a back seat to the need to meet the demands of ABR.

Implications for Practice

Teaching does not occur in a bubble. Many factors influence what happens every day in the classroom, from policies to current events to community support. Each of these factors have a profound effect on the educator, his or her beliefs, and how/what he or she teaches. Regardless of the policy context, teachers have immense power over what is taught in the classroom and how it is taught. As both Jordan and Nicole pointed out, this power comes with a level of pressure- how do you pick what to teach? Do you have a right to dictate the curriculum? What choices can and should be left up to the students and what choices must be made by the teacher? And, ultimately, who gets to decide what needs to be taught, be it skills or content? These questions form the backbone of social justice education and are also at the foundation of changes in policy. Thus, the way that teachers both report and enact their responses to these questions as policies continue to evolve will serve as the foundation for understanding how policy and identity interact. In looking at teacher practice, it would be important to gain further understanding into how teachers make these decisions and how this impacts their identities.

Implications for Policy

What became evident through this study was that context has a profound impact on the way that policy is integrated and the impact that it has on both the teacher and the students. Currently, policy focus on outcomes without looking at the underlying

inequities in schools. Nicole's school was at an advantage for several reasons: she did not face the pressure of being evaluated on her students' performances on standardized tests, she had greater educational resources, and she was given time to collaborate with her colleagues to develop curriculum. While she still functioned within the context of recent ABR developments, namely CCSS, the innate advantages of her context allowed her to develop a stronger social justice curriculum. Interestingly, the major policy advantage that Nicole had over Jordan in the study, namely that she was not evaluated based on her student's standardized test scores, was addressed in the most recent policy reform recommendations coming out of the state of New York. Governor Cuomo's commission recommended that teachers' evaluations not be tied to CCSS aligned tests for at least the next four years. By this point, a change in the presidency may profoundly affect the overall direction of ABR nationwide. However, as further policy are developed, it will be essential that policymakers look at and recognize the factors that shape the school context in ways that profoundly impact the way that policy is enacted and the impact that the policy has on different populations, particularly those that they claim to be aiming to help grow.

Implications for Teacher Training

As teachers are preparing to enter this educational environment, teacher-eduction programs can work to establish certain understandings that may help these new educators navigate ABR in ways that support the development of SJE. One major point where teacher education programs can assist new educators is the development of professional learning communities and collaborative relationships. Both Nicole and Jordan pointed to

the value of collaboration in developing social justice oriented curriculum. However, Jordan's school was not able to provide her with this support. Teacher education programs can help establish and maintain collaborative communities amongst the teachers they are training in order to ensure that their newly trained teachers have this valuable support network. Additionally, teacher education programs can focus on how SJE can be developed in the face of ABR. Both educators saw ways to use CCSS to guide and assist their development of social-justice oriented curriculum in ways that are not necessarily seen in the research or in teacher education programs. By further studying successful social justice educators who have navigated the realities of ABR, teacher education programs may be better able to prepare their educators to maintain and develop their personal beliefs even while navigating state and federal requirements.

Final Words

From the time I began teaching, it swiftly became apparent that education does not occur in a bubble- it is influenced by every aspect of life. In this study, I aimed to gain a stronger understanding of how other individuals who shared my passion for social justice were affected by a policy that I never had to deal with personally. Mostly, however, this research was influenced by a single statement made by a tenth grade student in the time I taught Global History in New York City public schools: "But Miss, why do we always have to learn about these people? They have nothing to do with us". Despite years of schooling and a diverse family and circle of friends, it was this one statement that led me to question what I was teaching and how I was teaching. Like Nicole and Jordan, I had to come to terms with the fact that I had the power, that I

controlled the environment. Like Jordan, I had to recognize how my position as a privileged white female had afforded me innate advantages and opportunities. But, most importantly, it sparked my interest in learning more about how the policies that govern our schools impact teachers and students. This dissertation represents the beginning of this exploration, allowing me to gain greater perspective into the myriad issues and circumstances that contribute to the implementation of policy in our schools.

Appendix A: Sleeter's Framework for Thinking Complexly About Multicultural

Curriculum (2005, p. 33)

	Task Definition	Perspective Taking	Self-Reflexivity	Locus of Decision Making
Emerging	• Assumes a "right" way to design and teach curriculum • Assumes one already understands what multicultural curriculum is, and that "new learning" involves adding onto that. • Ignores, sees as irrelevant, or lacks confidence to examine elements that are puzzling, feel threatening, or seem impractical.	• Assumes there is a body of "correct" knowledge or attitudes to teach. Tends to interpret and dismiss other perspectives or critical questions as opinion, personal criticism, or simply impractical.	• Seldom reflects on one's own work. • Strives for certainty, assumes that question oneself is the same as questioning one's competence. • Seeks approval for one's thinking from authority figures.	• Either looks to external authorities (the state, well-known people in the field, texts) to find out what and how to teach, or ignores them entirely. • Assumes that educational decision making flows from the top down.
Developing	• Recognizes more than one "right" way good curriculum could be designed and taught. • Willing to question things one thought one understood, and to explore elements or dimensions that are puzzling or new.	• Willing to consider multiple and possibly conflicting definitions of what is most worth knowing. • Able to acknowledge how one's own viewpoint, identity, and social location shapes one's perspective. • Willing to own one's judgments about what is best for kids	• Willing to acknowledge uncertainty, at least tentatively. • Occasionally questions self about what is most worth teaching and why. • Recognizes need to attend to practical consequences of one's teaching on students, while maintaining some level of critical questioning.	• Pays attention to external authorities, but also willing to seek input from students, parents, community members, or other teachers. • Explores how to construct decisions making in a way that both satisfies authorities and also invites bottom-up decision making.

Accomplished	• Assumes multiple ways of designing and teaching curriculum emanate from diverse ideologies. • Able to own and work with one's ideology. • Continually tries to recognize new dimensions of curriculum, and to figure out the most ethical as well as practical balance among competing demands.	• Actively seeks multiple perspectives. Makes explicit effort to learn from perspectives different from one's own, especially those that have been historically subjugated. • Able to articulate own perspective as one of many. • Able to invite dialog and discussion across divergent perspectives.	• Views uncertainty as tool for learning. • Consistently monitors, questions, and evaluates practical and ethical impacts of one's work on students. • Questions how one's own positionality, experiences, and point of view affect one's work, but can move forward while doing so.	• Negotiates decision making in a way that consciously places well-being of students at the center. • Regularly engages students and their communities in collaborative decision making, while attending to external expectations of students. • Able to take ownership for the consequences of one's decisions.

Appendix B: Recruitment Postings

Recruitment Posting for Facebook Groups
Hello, I am a doctoral candidate at Rutgers University and I am currently seeking participants for my dissertation study on the influence of Race to the Top/ Common Core State Standards on Social Justice education. I am specifically seeking teachers of English Language Arts or mathematics in grades four through eight in states that have received Race to the Top funding or adopted Common Core State Standards. In addition, I am looking for educators who self-identify as social justice and/or multicultural educators. Please send me a private message if you would be interested in participating in my study.

Recruitment Posting for Personal Facebook Page
Hi everyone! I am currently seeking participants for my dissertation study on the influence of Race to the Top on Social Justice education. I am specifically looking for teachers of English Language Arts or mathematics in grades four through eight in New York and New Jersey who self-identify as social justice and/or multicultural educators. If you are interested in participating or know someone who might be, please send me a private message. I will ask interested participants to fill out a brief survey. Based on the results, I will be selecting up to five interview subjects. Thank you in advance for your help!

Appendix C: Survey for Participants

Survey for Participants

Thank you for expressing interest in my dissertation study. In order to get a better sense of your beliefs as an educators, please select ten (10) of the following statements to describe yourself as a social justice educator and then rate how each one of the selected statements describes YOU, with 4 being a great deal and 1 being not at all.

Attitudes and Beliefs

As a social justice educator, I believe…

- that I can learn equally from my students.
- that all students should receive equal treatment in the classroom.
- that community involvement is essential to their success.
- that working in a diverse environment is essential to enacting a social justice-oriented curriculum.
- that curriculum provided by companies such as Pearson and Houghton-Mifflin are successful in adapting to social justice pedagogies.
- that I am a conduits for providing information to my students.
- that the experiences of my students should be an essential part of my curriculum.
- that a main goal of my teaching is to make all students feel good about themselves.
- that the goals, both academic and behavioral, set for my students should be ambitious and reflect high expectations
- that social justice education can happen anywhere.
- that recognizing differences in my students' backgrounds is essential to their success.
- that, regardless of how hard I try, I am not personally responsible for my students' success

Practices

As a social justice educator I…

- develop strong relationships with the families of my students.
- teach about injustice and discrimination in all forms.
- focus on the celebration of holidays representative of various ethnic groups.
- actively learn from my students and their families.
- develop curriculum that fosters acceptance among diverse students.
- promote action in response to injustice and discrimination.
- adapt the standard curriculum to represent my students and their cultures.
- analyze language used in policy and schools.
- ensure that my students make significant progress in standard measures of achievement
- add culturally-relevant figures to the curriculum to make my students feel represented.
- question power structures in my school and community.
- focus on issues surrounding race and ethnicity.
- model tasks for my students and scaffold my lessons to help my students be successful.
- provide spaces for my students to explore and develop their own opinions.
- rely on tests as the major tool for evaluating students.
- develop curriculum that allows for my students to act in response to student-identified injustice.
- ensure students demonstrate critical thinking.
- focus on rigorous academics to ensure my students have access to institutions of power.
- continually educates myself about and am involved in critical conversations about new policies.

Other (please describe)

Appendix D: Categorized Survey

Academic Press	• Modeling, scaffolding, and clarifying a challenging curriculum (Ferger, 2006; Lee, 1995)
	   o that all students should receive equal treatment in the classroom.
	   o model tasks for my students and scaffold my lessons to help my students be successful.
	• Creating a challenging curriculum and setting ambitious goals (Brown, 2003; Sheets, 1995)
	   o that curriculum provided by companies such as Pearson and Houghton-Mifflin are successful in adapting to social justice pedagogies. (negative indicator)
	   o that the goals, both academic and behavioral, set for my students should be ambitious and reflect high expectations
	   o focus on rigorous academics to ensure my students have access to institutions of power.
	• Using students' strengths as a starting point within and across lessons (Brenner, 1998; Brown, 2003; Sheets, 1995)
	   o that recognizing differences in my students' backgrounds is essential to their success.
	   o actively learn from my students and their families.
	• Investing and taking personal responsibility for students' successes (Lipman, 1995; Sheets, 1995)
	   o that I am a conduit for providing information to my students.
	   o that, regardless of how hard I try, I am not personally responsible for my students' success (negative indicator) (n
	• Creating a nurturing, cooperative social environment and an effective physical environment (Brown, 2003; Parsons, 2005; Wortham & Contreras, 2002)
	   o that a main goal of my teaching is to make all students feel good about themselves. (negative indicator)
	• Having high behavioral expectations (Brown, 2003, 2004)
	   o that the goals, both academic and behavioral, set for my students should be ambitious and reflect high expectations

Cultural Relevance	• Reshaping the prescribed curriculum (Bell & Clark, 1998; Ferger, 2006; Hefflin, 2002; Lee 1995)
	o that working in a diverse environment is essential to enacting a social justice-oriented curriculum. (negative indicator)
	o that curriculum provided by companies such as Pearson and Houghton-Mifflin are successful in adapting to social justice pedagogies. (negative indicator)
	o that recognizing differences in my students' backgrounds is essential to their success.
	o focus on the celebration of holidays representative of various ethnic groups. (Negative indicator)
	o develop curriculum that fosters acceptance among diverse students.
	o adapt the standard curriculum to represent my students and their cultures.
	o add culturally-relevant figures to the curriculum to make my students feel represented. (Negative indicator)
	o focus on issues surrounding race and ethnicity. (Negative indicator)
	• Building on students' funds of knowledge (Hefflin, 2002; Benson, 2003; Brown, 2003)
	o that I can learn equally from my students.
	o that community involvement is essential to their success.
	o that the experiences of my students should be an essential part of my curriculum.
	o develop strong relationships with the families of my students.
	o rely on tests as the major tool for evaluating students.
	• Building on students' language (Morrell & Duncan-Andrade, 2002; Brenner, 1998; Pierce, 2005)
	o develop strong relationships with the families of my students.

Critical Consciousness	- Incorporating texts that allow for students to think and respond critically (Feger, 2006; Tate, 1995) - that curriculum provided by companies such as Pearson and Houghton-Mifflin are successful in adapting to social justice pedagogies. (Negative indicator) - teach about injustice and discrimination in all forms. - provide spaces for my students to explore and develop their own opinions. - ensure students demonstrate critical thinking. - Engaging students in social justice work (Tate, 1995; Howard, 2001) - that social justice education can happen anywhere. - promote action in response to injustice and discrimination. - develop curriculum that allows for my students to act in response to student-identified injustice. - Making explicit the power dynamics of mainstream society (Lipman, 1995; Howard, 2001; Gay & Kirkland, 2003) - teach about injustice and discrimination in all forms. - analyze language used in policy and schools. - ensure that my students make significant progress in standard measures of achievement - question power structures in my school and community. - continually educates myself about and am involved in critical conversations about new policies. - Sharing power in the classroom (Sheets, 1995; Wortham & Contreras, 2002) - that I can learn equally from my students. - that community involvement is essential to their success. - actively learn from my students and their families.

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