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LOYOLA MARYMOUNT UNIVERSITY

Teaching for Social Justice in the Secondary English Language Arts Classroom: Case Studies in Independent Schools

by

Alexandra Lyon Perelman

A dissertation presented to the Faculty of the School of Education,

Loyola Marymount University,

in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Education

2023

Teaching for Social Justice in the Secondary English Language Arts Classroom:

Case Studies in Independent Schools

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by

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This dissertation written by Alexandra Lyon Perelman, under the direction of the Dissertation Committee, is approved and accepted by all committee members, in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education.

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DEDICATION

In memory of my dear mother

Judith Kotzen Lyon

March 1, 1947 – November 14, 2016

Sweet Angel

To my sons,

Jackson Lyon Perelman and William Lyon Perelman,

my greatest teachers.

May you be defenders of justice.

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ABSTRACT

Teaching for Social Justice in the Secondary English Language Arts Classroom:

Case Studies in Independent Schools

by

Alexandra Lyon Perelman

Secondary English language arts (ELA) teachers in independent K–12 schools are well-situated to teach for social justice as they do not face the same constraints prevalent in many public schools, such as restrictive curricular mandates, high-stakes testing, and legislation resulting from the weaponization of critical pedagogy. Thus, secondary ELA teachers often have the liberty to craft their own curricula and use literature, verse, and other media as vehicles for teaching social justice. Despite an increase in empirical research examining social justice teaching in various contexts throughout K–12 education, there was a gap in the research focused on social justice teaching in the secondary ELA classroom in independent schools. To address this gap, this qualitative multicase study investigated how three secondary ELA teachers in three independent schools in Southern California perceived and enacted social justice teaching to foster critical engagement. The study further explored how teacher participants' beliefs and practices about social justice teaching intersected with their independent schools.

Cross-case analyses of demographic questionnaires, semistructured interviews, classroom observations, and class syllabi provided rich descriptions of how secondary ELA teachers understood and operationalized justice-oriented practices and demonstrated meaningful social justice teaching in the independent school context. Findings revealed teacher participants valued inclusive curricula, identity work, building relationships, the examination of literature through

multiple perspectives, discussion-centered classrooms, students' well-being, and critical engagement. Additionally, cross-case themes identified included teachers' autonomy, commitment to growth, and the navigation of tensions associated with teaching in privileged schools.

PROLOGUE

As a former secondary public school English language arts (ELA) teacher, I saw firsthand the positive effects of teaching for social justice in a public high school in New York City. I taught for social justice by building relationships, using critical theory, and engaging in student-centered critical dialogue to frame my curriculum with my 11th and 12th grade advanced placement literature students. I first learned how to use literary criticism or lenses to frame my curriculum and foster critical engagement while coteaching a 12th grade Women in Literature course as a student teacher. I was introduced to Appleman's (2000) seminal text, *Critical Encounters,* which I used as a guide to craft lesson plans centered on lens work. Although teachers can be intimidated by literary criticism, Appleman (2000) provided a compelling case for its use in the secondary ELA classroom. She made lens work accessible by demonstrating how to use it to create a meaningful, engaging curriculum with secondary ELA students, and by providing useful lesson plans for implementation. With her suggestions, my students critically investigated literature employing a multitude of lenses. As my students examined a variety of texts, they became attuned to perspective taking, questioning dominant narratives, and discovering new ways of viewing the world, which lead to increased awareness and criticality.

Another way I enacted social justice teaching was through dialogic teaching. My approach was underpinned by inquiry, student-centered literature-based discussions, and reflection. At the beginning of the year, I scaffolded extensive preliminary discussions with my class communities about how we envisioned engaging in discussions based on risk taking, trust, and respect. These exploratory discussions and subsequent collective and individual

opportunities for reflection also contributed to the honing of students' critical dispositions and were an integral part of their learning process.

Though some of the ways I enacted teaching for social justice were through building relationships, using literary theory, and using dialogic teaching, there are many ways for secondary ELA teachers to use their position to implement social justice-oriented practices in their classrooms and to foster critical engagement (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Grant & Agosto, 2008). When I left the classroom, I wanted to explore how other English teachers were teaching for social justice and investigate practices that led to agency and student empowerment in their classrooms. I was curious if and how secondary ELA teachers were being taught to teach for social justice as part of their preservice preparation and if specific approaches were being universally implemented. Toward this end, I returned to education as a doctoral student to examine social justice-oriented practices in the secondary ELA classroom.

CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND OF STUDY

Social justice teaching is a broadly interpreted concept with important implications for practice. Whereas *social justice* is a term used for a variety of equity-oriented principles and approaches (Agarwal et al., 2010) and *teaching* refers to practices of instruction, there is often debate about the meaning of social justice teaching in spheres of education (Dover, 2009). Because the definition of social justice teaching is nebulous and fluid by nature, there are misunderstandings about its implementation and efficacy (Agarwal et al., 2010; Dover, 2009). As stated by Novak (2000), "It [social justice] is allowed to float in the air as if everyone will recognize an instance of it when it appears" (p. 11, as cited in Grant & Agosto, p. 177).

For teachers, this uncertainty about what social justice teaching is can lead to confusion over how to best enact social justice teaching practices in the classroom (Agarwal et al., 2010; Bender-Slack, 2010; Burke & Collier, 2017; Dover, 2013). Teaching for social justice can be considered "both a goal and a process" (Bell, 2007, p. 3, as cited in Styslinger et al., 2019, p. 1) and can be ongoing and challenging (Mthethwa-Sommers, 2014, as cited in Styslinger et al., 2019, p. 1). Teachers face barriers integrating social justice teaching in their school contexts because of factors such as resistant leadership, school culture, inadequate resources, restrictive government mandates and accountability measures, and a lack of practitioner autonomy due to highly prescriptive curricula (Agarwal et al., 2010; Bender-Slack, 2010; Burke & Collier, 2017; Dover, 2009, 2010, 2013, 2016; Navarro et al., 2020; Sleeter, 2008). Critics have argued social justice-oriented initiatives might not result in increased academic outcomes; however, the two can go hand in hand (Dover, 2009, 2010, 2013, 2016). Teachers and teacher educators can also

face pushback from critics because the development of social justice teaching dispositions can be regarded as political or a means of indoctrination (Alsup & Miller, 2014). Further, the contentious debate over critical race theory, which has been weaponized for political gain since 2020, and the resulting surge of legislation to constrain educators and dismantle critical engagement in schooling threatens to silence teachers (Gross, 2022).

Despite the obstacles educators might face with enactment, social justice education "[cultivates] flourishing lives" for students (Grant, 2012, p. 910). According to the Commission on Teacher Credentialing (2009), teachers have the most significant impact on a student's education. Teachers have the capacity to create transformative spaces by challenging inequities through curricula, critical pedagogy, and the facilitation of meaningful dialogue and reflection with their students (Glasgow, 2001; Lalas, 2007; Naiditch, 2010; Shallish et al., 2020). Specifically, secondary English language arts (ELA) teachers can use literature, verse, and other media as vehicles to teach for social justice as English education is generally a field that fosters a critical approach to teaching (Alsup & Miller, 2014; Burke & Collier, 2017).

When using a critical approach to the investigation of texts, teachers can encourage students to analyze them by interrogating hierarchical systems of oppression and paying attention to how knowledge is constructed, how language is used, whose voices are expressed, whose voices are silenced, and whose perspectives are missing (Giroux, 1992; Lewison et al., 2008; McLaughlin & DeVoogd, 2004). Consequently, students learn to approach the investigation of literature from a critical stance, engaging in inquiry, perspective taking, and reflection to further "read both the word and the world" (Janks, 2013, p. 227) and thereby develop critical literacy (Appleman, 2009; Burke & Collier, 2017; Freire & Macedo, 2001; Naiditch, 2010; Thein et al.,

2007). Students can learn to seek out different perspectives and begin to address and disrupt dominant norms and inequities. Addressing discrimination and oppression in all forms and learning about solidarity and liberation in the secondary ELA classroom can support the well-being of students and the collective well-being of school communities. As such, the cultivation of critical dispositions can prompt student agency in the pursuit of learning and social justice (Styslinger et al., 2019).

Social Justice Teaching in the Secondary ELA Classroom: Dover's Framework

Numerous scholars have provided varying definitions, approaches, and frameworks for social justice teaching, which have shaped teachers' interpretations and their curricular and pedagogical practices. From their research, Dover (2016) contended teachers' and teacher educators' practices are derived from the following conceptual and pedagogical foundations with equity and justice orientations: (a) democratic education, (b) critical pedagogy, (c) culturally responsive education, (d) ethnic studies, (e) multicultural education, and (f) social justice education. Secondary ELA teachers specifically enact teaching for social justice by using critical literacy, the inclusion of multicultural texts, and the investigation of social justice issues through literature (Dover, 2016). According to Dover (2013, 2016), social justice teaching is the convergence of three dimensions: curriculum, pedagogy, and social action. This description of social justice teaching stemmed from a study that examined how secondary ELA teachers in standards-based schools conceptualized and taught for social justice (Dover, 2010). Given the wide range of interpretations of social justice teaching, for the purposes of this study, Dover's (2013, 2016) three-pronged framework informed my examination of secondary ELA teachers' perceptions and implementation of social justice teaching in independent schools. Although

Dover's (2013, 2016) interpretation of social justice teaching in the secondary ELA classroom was primarily based on research in standards-based public schools, it can also be applied to different school contexts.

Professional Teaching Standards

Another place where social justice teaching is defined for secondary ELA teachers is in the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) Standards for Initial Preparation of Teachers. Founded in 1911, NCTE is a not-for-profit professional association that provides resources and support to over 25,000 ELA educators and their students from prekindergarten through graduate school (National Council of Teachers of English [NCTE], n.d.). The current vision of NCTE is rooted in justice and equity: "NCTE and its members will apply the power of language and literacy to actively pursue justice and equity for all students and the educators who serve them" (NCTE, n.d., para. 5).

NCTE, one of 13 organizations with membership in the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP), establishes guidelines for the initial preparation of teachers of English language arts in Grades 7–12. In 2006, social justice was initially removed as a performance indicator from the National Council of Accreditation of Teacher Education's standards (CAEP as of 2014; Alsup & Miller, 2014). In 2012, NCTE revised its standards for teacher preparation to include the term social justice based on an abundance of research supporting its use. Standard VI included social justice as a performance indicator for the development of teacher dispositions (Dover, 2016; NCTE, 2012). Element 1 of Standard VI explicitly stated educators should promote social justice and critical engagement as part of their ELA and literacy instruction (Alsup & Miller, 2014).

Nine years later, NCTE (2021) revised its guidelines to include an emphasis on antiracist and antibias language, concepts rooted in equity and justice often associated with social justice teaching. In addition, language such as fostering an inclusive learning environment, accessing funds of knowledge, and critically engaging students was woven into the new standards (NCTE, 2021). It is important to note that social justice was removed again from the NCTE's standards to be replaced with more explicit terminology. Because social justice has been widely interpreted, NCTE (2021) revised its standards to use more specific language to narrowly define practices that promote social justice. The revised standards incorporated the term *antiracist* to depict teaching and learning that prompts teachers and students to actively examine structural racism in schools (Goering, 2021). Lee (2006) asserted it is imperative antiracism be part of school curriculum, instruction, and policies so teachers can take explicit action to engage in antiracist practices. After receiving feedback during the revision process, NCTE (2021) also added the term *antibias*, derived from the Southern Poverty Law Center's social justice standards, to ensure teachers actively address all forms of discrimination (Learning for Justice, 2022).

Although NCTE's (2021) standards are intended to shape teacher preparation for secondary ELA teachers, it is incumbent upon teacher preparation programs to sufficiently prepare and guide teacher candidates on how to implement these standards. Furthermore, teachers need consistent support and ongoing sustainable professional development once they begin working in schools (Huchting & Bickett, 2021; Khalifa et al., 2016). Though public school teachers face specific challenges of enacting and supporting social justice teaching initiatives, independent schools have a different governance structure that might lend itself to justice-oriented approaches. According to Boyd (2017), the ways teachers teach for social justice are

contingent upon their school contexts, including factors like student demographics, location, and political atmosphere. Typically, teachers in independent schools are not constrained by external accountability mandates. They often have the freedom to craft their own curricula and access adequate resources for text selection. Moreover, teachers in independent schools generally work with mission-driven school leadership that might support a justice-oriented approach to teaching.

Social Justice Teaching in Independent Schools Contexts

According to the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS; National Association of Independent Schools [NAIS], n.d.), independent schools are a type of nonprofit school that are independent in their philosophy, financing, and governance. Independent schools have the latitude to establish their own mission, admit students based on their own criteria, define standards for their faculty, and devise their own programming. Independent schools do not rely on federal and local government funding; they are financed by tuition, gifting, and earnings from endowment income (K12 Academics, n.d.). They do not receive funds from tax contributions, and, in contrast to private schools, they do not receive funding from religious institutions or for-profit entities (Kennedy, 2019). Although independent schools are considered private educational institutions and can have religious affiliations, they are characterized as financing and governing themselves. They are run and operated by independent school boards, which shape schools' visions and oversee their fiscal priorities (NAIS, n.d.). Independent schools are accountable to their students and families as stipulated in enrollment contracts and are accredited by state-approved bodies (California Department of Education, 2023b).

According to NAIS (n.d.), based on their national Data and Analysis for School Leadership survey for the 2021–2022 school year, the median class size in independent schools

is 15 students, and the average teacher to student ratio is 9:1. Given that independent schools are a small percentage of private educational institutions, they educate close to 2% of the school population and 10% of private school students. There are currently 1,651 independent schools registered with NAIS serving over 700,000 students in the United States (NAIS, n.d.). For this study, an independent school can be defined as having its own philosophy or mission, financing, and governance and is a member of NAIS and the California Associate of Independent Schools (CAIS).

Independent Schools in California

Privately run schools have been a part of California's educational landscape since the state was admitted to the United States in 1850. However, in 1891, legislation was passed for the state to create public high school districts and levy annual taxes to support them (Turpin, 1975). The independent school movement gained traction in the 1960s, stemming from dissatisfaction with traditional public schooling, and has steadily increased since that time. Parents, predominantly those who had means, could choose schools reflecting their value system and goals for their children (Gulla, 2021). In addition, integration efforts in California resulted in mandated busing in the late 1970s, which prompted White families who had financial means to enroll their children in private schools (Blume, 2019). According to California Associate of Independent Schools (CAIS; California Associate of Independent Schools [CAIS], n.d.), the 235 independent schools in California serve close to 100,000 students. Of the enrolled students in independent schools in California, 42% identify as students of color, which is higher than the national average, and 36% of independent school teachers identify as faculty of color (CAIS, n.d.; NAIS, 2023).

Progressive Education

Initially, independent schools selected for this study were rooted in progressive pedagogy as progressive practices can often overlap or align with aspects of social justice teaching. Progressive education arose in response to the limitations of traditional schooling. John Dewey, considered a seminal theorist of the progressive education movement, developed progressive ideas for education at the University of Chicago Laboratory School (Tippett & Lee, 2019). Dewey believed in "the notion that education must engage with and enlarge experience; that thinking and reflection are central to the act of teaching; and that students must freely interact with their environments in the practice of constructing knowledge" (Darder et al., 2017, p. 3). Dewey posited children learn better by engaging in hands-on, experiential learning. In addition, Dewey advocated for the encouragement and development of students' natural curiosity rather than the emphasis of rote learning methods common in schools at the time (Moyer, 2009; Tippett & Lee, 2019). Progressive pedagogy aimed to address all aspects of a child's growth—the whole child. Though there have been varying interpretations and ideological tensions within the progressive education movement, specifically debate between child-centered progressives and social reconstructionist progressives (i.e., social reform through schooling), some key aspects of contemporary progressive schooling include student-centered learning, project-based learning, collaborative or cooperative learning, reflection, and social and democratic responsibility (Moyer, 2009; Tippett & Lee, 2019) As such, teachers serve as guides or facilitators of learning, rather than leaders who lecture or rely on rote learning methods.

Independent schools, including those that integrate progressive practices, can potentially serve as incubators for innovation and social justice teaching as they do not face the same

constraints prevalent in many public schools. According to Gulla (2021) "independent schools are particularly well-positioned to develop, adopt, and share approaches to current educational challenges and changes that can broadly benefit all students—public, private, and independent" (The Benefits of Independence section, para. 2). Although research supported the benefits of social justice teaching for marginalized students, according to Goodman (2000), it is also necessary to examine, how "racially, economically, and otherwise privileged" (Gorski, 2021, p. 233) students in independent schools learn how to engage in critical work and consider how their positionality might aid or inhibit the process. I used Gorski's (2021) terminology to describe students of privilege in this study. Further, it is important to explore how teachers navigate the tensions of social justice work with students at the intersection of diversity and privilege to promote and sustain truly equitable and inclusive spaces of learning.

Although there is socioeconomic diversity at independent schools, many students who attend independent schools are financially advantaged. Therefore, independent schools can be seen as "critical contexts, given the affluent wield a grossly disproportionate amount of power" (Huchting & Bickett, 2021, p. 2). In addition, it is important for White teachers and students in school communities of privilege to engage in critical dialogue as they continue to benefit from the status quo (Schieble et al., 2020). When White teachers facilitate critical conversations and address and deconstruct Whiteness with their students, it becomes less onerous for teachers of color (Schieble et al., 2020). As the number of faculty of color do not mirror the student diversity found in independent schools in Southern California, it is especially vital that independent schools do not rely on their limited teachers of color to bear the responsibility of tackling systemic inequities and racism with their students (Dominguez, 2015).

Statement of the Problem

Despite an increase of empirical research focused on teaching for social justice in different contexts, there was a paucity of research concerning social justice teaching in the secondary ELA classroom in independent schools. This study addressed that gap and aimed to provide a deeper understanding of how secondary ELA teachers in the independent school context perceived teaching for social justice and how they implemented their vision through their curriculum and pedagogy. This study also explored how secondary ELA teachers employed practices in schools considered to be potential sites of innovative social justice work to foster critical engagement and, thereby, contribute to the disruption of systemic inequities.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to present and compare case studies of three secondary ELA teachers in independent secondary schools in Southern California to learn how they understood and enacted social justice teaching in their practice. Dover's (2013, 2016) three-dimensional framework of curriculum, pedagogy, and social action, which came from an investigation of how secondary ELA teachers conceptualized and taught for social justice in standards-driven schools (Dover, 2010), guided my examination of practices teachers implemented with their students to cultivate critical dispositions or critical consciousness. This study also examined how a variety of independent school contexts shaped and impacted teachers' practices. It aimed to investigate how structural aspects such as governance, policies, and philosophy and factors such as school culture might influence teachers' understandings and enactment of justice-oriented practices.

Research Questions

This study was guided by the following questions:

1. How do three secondary ELA educators in independent schools each conceptualize and enact social justice teaching?
2. How do three secondary ELA educators' beliefs and practices about social justice teaching intersect with their independent school contexts?

Significance of Study

Although social justice teaching can positively influence the lives of students, social justice teaching has not been fully accepted by educators because it has been considered vague and political (Alsup & Miller, 2014). Scholars in the field have provided insight into the landscape of social justice teaching in the secondary ELA classroom; however, there was a gap in research associated with the independent school space. The findings of my study were significant because they revealed a rich description of how three secondary ELA teachers in the independent school context each conceptualized and enacted social justice teaching practices to foster critical engagement. The cases provided concrete examples of meaningful social justice practices for secondary ELA teachers to integrate into their classrooms in a variety of settings. This study examined what can be gleaned from secondary ELA teachers committed to justice-oriented teaching in three different independent schools, two of which were rooted in social justice pedagogy, and teaching in spaces which could be considered sites of educational innovation.

In addition to examining secondary ELA independent school teachers' beliefs and practices about social justice teaching, this study was significant as it illuminated how the

structural aspects of independent schools such as governance, policies, and mission and factors such as school culture influenced teachers' justice-oriented practices. This study elucidated that teaching in independent school spaces supported and furthered teachers' efforts to teach for social justice. It also revealed teachers must negotiate tensions relating to social justice teaching within their contexts because of the privileged nature of independent schools. It became evident that teachers must acquire strategies for teaching both marginalized students and racially, socioeconomically, or otherwise privileged students (Goodman, 2000), but not at the expense of marginalized students (Gorski, 2021).

Theoretical Framework

Freire's (2018) theory of critical consciousness and dialogical action helped ground my initial exploration of social justice education in the secondary ELA classroom. According to Freire, the foundation of teaching for social justice begins with nurturing critical consciousness or *conscientization*, which is a process of engaging the world and others critically (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Critical consciousness builds awareness and prompts students to question forms of oppression and the dominant systems that sustain them. Critical consciousness increases as students become more aware of the contradictions in the world (Styslinger et al., 2019). Freire (2018) also stressed the importance of students being engaged in dialogue with their teacher and the curriculum (Naiditch, 2010). Instead of teachers depositing knowledge to their students, known as *banking education*, students actively participate in the co-construction of knowledge (i.e., dialogical action; Freire, 2018). Reflection and action are two essential components of dialogical action. (Naiditch, 2010). Hence, the fundamental underpinnings of Freire's (2018)

framework are critical consciousness and dialogical action and reflection, which translate to praxis.

Freire's (2018) liberatory framework is foundational to critical pedagogy, an approach to teaching and learning that reveals and critiques inequitable hierarchical systems of power and oppression that affect all aspects of education. According to Giroux (2011), critical pedagogy goes further than simply cultivating critical skills and moral judgements, it "provides tools to unsettle commonsense assumptions, theorize matters of self and social agency, and engage the ever-changing demands and promises of a democratic polity" (p. 3). Many scholars in the field of social justice education in the secondary ELA classroom have used critical pedagogy to inform their own theoretical frameworks and research on best practices. Freire's (2018) ideas of critical consciousness, dialogic teaching, and praxis along with Dover's (2013, 2016) three dimensions of social justice teaching practices informed my examination of how three secondary ELA teachers in independent schools each conceptualized and enacted social justice teaching in their practice to foster critical dispositions.

Methodology and Research Design

I conducted a qualitative descriptive multicase study using a demographic questionnaire, three semistructured interviews, two classroom observations, and document analysis of course syllabi with three secondary ELA teachers who teach at independent secondary educational institutions. According to Kirkland and Filipiak (2008), "It is only possible to understand the meanings of complex concepts like teaching and justice through our stories" (p. 45). A multicase study approach provided in-depth narratives of how secondary ELA teachers working at three independent schools in Southern California perceived and enacted social justice teaching

practices in their classrooms. Each case revealed how their unique lived experiences and positionality influenced their teaching as there are many ways teachers can interpret and adapt social justice teaching practices to their classrooms (Boyd, 2017). Three separate independent school sites were examined to illustrate how distinct structural aspects shaped and impacted teachers' practices. One site is considered a college preparatory school, whereas the other two are justice-oriented college preparatory schools rooted in progressive pedagogy.

Data Collection

I used a demographic questionnaire prior to the interview process to collect information about participants' backgrounds, teaching preparation and experiences, and school contexts. Then, I conducted confidential, semistructured interviews because they afforded me the opportunity to elicit more expansive responses to questions; participants had opportunities to generate their conclusions, contributing to an iterative process (Stroh, 2015). The process of interviewing created meaningful, emergent opportunities for relationship building between me and my participants. The interviews were broken up into three segments and consisted of theoretically based questions and open-ended questions grounded in the participants' experiences (Galletta & Cross, 2013). I created an observation tool to conduct classroom observations and examine evidence of social justice teaching practices based on a priori codes from the reviewed literature. A priori codes were also grounded in Dover's (2013, 2016) three-dimensional framework of curriculum, pedagogy, and social action and terminology from the NCTE's (2021) most recent teacher preparation standards. The observation tool included space for field notes for the documentation process (Saldaña, 2020). Analysis of teacher-created class syllabi targeted evidence of curricular and pedagogical practices rooted in social justice.

Data Analysis

Following the collection of data from the interview process, classroom observations, and the examination of teacher syllabi, I used inductive analysis to code data by identifying emerging categories and a priori codes gathered from the literature. As the coding process unfolded, I wrote interview transcription memos to summarize the data, record emergent themes, and pose questions about the findings from the cases. After analyzing each case's interviews, I used comparative analysis across the cases to identify overlaps and common categories. Then, I triangulated the data by analyzing the observation tools with field notes and class syllabi. Once data were triangulated and written up, I ascertained the accuracy of the findings and obtained feedback through member checking to strengthen trustworthiness of the data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Limitations

Five limitations pertained to this qualitative study on teaching for social justice in the secondary ELA classroom. The first concerned the sample size of three participants in this study. As a result, even though the findings may be transferrable, they are not generalizable to all secondary ELA teachers across a variety of school settings. Second, participants' responses may not be representative of all secondary ELA teachers teaching for social justice because teachers were selected from a small number of independent schools, which had inherently less constraints than public schools. Third, the study was limited to teachers who were dedicated to a justice-oriented approach and were willing to participate in the study. Fourth, participants' responses may not be representative of all secondary ELA teachers teaching for social justice given the many ways teachers interpret and teach for social justice in the secondary ELA classroom. Fifth,

the study was generally focused on selected best practices from previous research; because social justice teaching is nuanced and there are many practices associated with it, the study did not comprise all the practices that promote equity, justice, and critical consciousness in the secondary ELA classroom.

Delimitations

This study was delimited to a small sample of secondary ELA teachers in Southern California independent schools. Additionally, this study was delimited to teacher interviews. Student interviews would have greatly illuminated the impact of social justice teaching; however, it would have been a difficult process to receive approval for interviews with participants under the age of 18. The study was also delimited to virtual interviews for transcription purposes and convenience for teachers' schedules, which potentially could have affected teachers' responses. Finally, this study was delimited to a specific time frame of the 2022–2023 school year.

Assumptions

This study operated under the following assumptions: (a) implementing social justice teaching in the secondary ELA classroom is of positive value to students; (b) social justice teaching can foster students' critical dispositions; (c) secondary ELA teachers selected for this study were committed to social justice practices; (d) independent schools, particularly justice-oriented educational institutions, are sites for innovation; (e) and teachers who participated in the study openly provided accurate information.

Organization of Dissertation

This dissertation is organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 introduced the research by including the background of the problem, research questions, the purpose and significance of the study, the theoretical framework, research design and methodology, and limitations, delimitations, and assumptions of the study. Chapter 2 provides a comprehensive review of literature associated with social justice teaching frameworks, teacher preparation, teacher enactment, obstacles to implementation, and best practices including literary theory, critical literacy, culturally and linguistically responsive and sustaining pedagogy, dialogic teaching, and social action projects. The chapter also examines the implications of social justice teaching in the secondary ELA classroom and outcomes related to best practices. Chapter 3 details the research design and methodology of the study including context, procedures, participants, data collection, data analysis, and a review of the limitations and delimitations of the study. Chapter 4 presents the data and includes collective case themes. Chapter 5 provides further analysis and discussion of the study's findings along with recommendations and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

As mentioned in Chapter 1, social justice teaching, particularly in the secondary English language arts (ELA) classroom, can contribute to "flourishing lives" for students (Grant, 2012, p. 910). Because social justice teaching is widely interpreted, there are often questions about its meaning, efficacious practices, enactment, and outcomes. Thus, the purpose of this literature review is to (a) examine conceptual frameworks of social justice teaching that can be applied to the secondary ELA classroom, (b) identify best practices for teachers to cultivate critical dispositions or critical consciousness in the secondary ELA classroom, and (c) explore the implications of these practices. To address these objectives, I first review varying interpretations and frameworks of social justice education. Next, I examine how teachers are prepared to teach for social justice and the challenges and limitations they face upon implementation. Then, I present research relating to best practices in the secondary ELA classroom including literary theory, critical literacy, culturally and linguistically responsive and sustaining pedagogy, dialogic teaching, critical dialogue, and social action projects. Finally, I examine research on the impact of social justice teaching in the secondary ELA classroom.

Conceptual Foundations of Social Justice Teaching

Social justice ideologies emerged during the 20th century, but, over time, they have become more influential in educational discourse (Adams et al., 2007; Alsup & Miller, 2014; Bender-Slack, 2010). Social justice education theory initially centered on higher educational and organizational contexts; however, since the 1990s, teaching for social justice has become more commonplace as part of teacher education programs and K–12 schooling (Dover, 2010). As the

term *multicultural education* came under attack, educational researchers began to employ the term social justice to identify their work (Grant & Agosto, 2008; North, 2008). However, with increased popularity, the term social justice has faced criticism, and there has been continued debate about its meaning (Bender-Slack, 2010; Dover 2009).

Numerous scholars have examined the foundations of social justice education and the significance of promoting equity-oriented practices in K–12 schooling. According to Hytten and Bettez (2011), "there are multiple discourses that educators draw upon when claiming a social justice orientation, including democratic education, critical pedagogy, multiculturalism, feminism, queer theory, anti-oppressive education, cultural studies and critical race theory" (pp. 8–9). Most definitions of social justice education are rooted in the values of challenging inequities in schools and society at large (Matteson & Boyd, 2017). Giroux (1992) asserted social justice pedagogy promotes space where teachers and students can take a critical stance by questioning what is considered knowledge, how it is constructed, how it is used, and how it is "transformed by a particular relationship between the self, others, and the larger world" (p. 99). Lalas (2007) contended social justice teaching is considered by educators to be the centering of "differences in race, cultural beliefs, social norms, intellectual flexibility, and personal perspectives and dispositions" (p. 19) in the multicultural, urban context. Lalas posited teachers can foster social justice by valuing equity and diversity and by creating student-centered classrooms. Lalas also noted social justice education can be considered a belief system or set of ethics based on equity, care, and justice. Researchers have also interpreted social justice education as a means of creating more inclusive schooling and providing students with access to high-quality, engaging teaching and sufficient resources (Carlisle et al., 2006; Lalas, 2007;

Shallish et al., 2020). Further, as mentioned in Chapter 1, National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE, n.d.) considered the terms antiracist and antibias to reflect social justice teaching and learning in ELA classrooms. Antiracism is intended to move beyond identifying structural and systemic racial inequities; it encourages active, persistent engagement to dismantle them (Goering, 2021; Rembert et al., 2019).

Rather than attempting to cover all the extensive research examining social justice education in this section, I review some of the frameworks that have shaped my understanding of social justice teaching and learning in the secondary ELA classroom. Cochran-Smith, a preeminent scholar in the field of teacher preparation and social justice education, has influenced much of the research in the field. Cochran-Smith (2004) argued social justice initiatives should be an integral part of teacher preparation and outcomes. Cochran-Smith's (2004) framework included the following six core justice-oriented principles for teachers (a) cultivate learning communities in which students are coconstructors of knowledge and teachers set high expectations for students and themselves; (b) develop students' existing knowledge, interests, cultural, and linguistic resources; (c) target academic skills and work to bridge gaps in students' learning; (d) encourage family and community engagement; (e) use varied forms of assessment; and (f) integrate activism, power, and inequity into the curriculum (Dover, 2009). These tenets have contributed to subsequent research on social justice education and teacher preparation, particularly pertaining to centering students, honoring the cultural and linguistic diversity of students and their families, and using a critical, activist approach.

Cochran-Smith's (2004) six-principle framework informed Carlisle et al.'s (2006) research on the relationship between teaching for social justice in the secondary ELA classroom

and K–12 student outcomes. Carlisle et al. (2006) defined social justice teaching as a "conscious and reflexive blend of process" (p. 57) or pedagogy that fosters critical perspectives, equity, and social action across divergent groups, including factors such as race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and ability. Carlisle et al. focused on developing a revised framework for social justice education and exploring the link between social justice teaching and student progress. As part of a field-based study, Carlisle et al. built upon Cochran-Smith's (2004) work and developed a framework for social justice education based on five core principles: (a) inclusion and equity, (b) high expectations, (c) reciprocal community relationships, (d) a system-wide approach, and (e) direct social justice education and intervention. Though there is much overlap with Cochran-Smith's (2004) six-principle framework, Carlisle et al. (2006) specifically incorporated a system-wide approach to justice-oriented schooling as part of their revised framework of principles for social justice education.

Lalas's (2007) research on social justice education focused on teaching for social justice in multicultural, urban schools, particularly those serving students in poverty. Lalas explored various conceptualizations of social justice teaching (citing Bell, 1997; Brandes & Kelly, 2004; Brown, 2004; Cochran-Smith, 2004; Darling-Hammond et al., 2002; Marshall & Oliva, 2006; Solomon et al., 2006). Lalas (2007) underscored the significance of ensuring students of all needs and backgrounds have equitable access to materials. Through an examination of social justice education, Lalas identified common principles drawn from previous conceptualizations to devise a framework that included: (a) understanding oneself in relation to other individuals or group of individuals, (b) appreciating diversity and promoting equity, (c) recognizing inequities and how to diminish them, (d) ensuring equitable participation and allocation of resources, (e)

creating a caring and culturally responsive learning environment, (f) working together as a learning community, (g) engaging in classroom inquiry, (h) promoting critical thinking and reflection, and (i) using varied forms of assessment. Lalas's equity-oriented framework overlapped with both Cochran-Smith's (2004) and Carlisle et al.'s (2006) principles while also highlighting the importance of Cochran-Smith's (2004) assertion that cultivation of students' critical dispositions, encouragement of multiple perspectives, and promotion of civic engagement are integral to social justice teaching.

Grant (2012) interpreted social justice teaching as a means to "encourage students to grapple with what it means to be human, to understand democracy . . . and a commitment to equality and justice" (p. 913). Grant outlined five core principles for social justice education: (a) self-assessment, (b) critical questioning, (c) practicing democracy, (d) social action, and (e) criteria for adjudication. Grant grounded the principles in a multicultural, democratic framework based on the culture and history of Black Americans, various civil rights movements, and the experiences of multiculturalists working in schools. The framework emphasized the connection between student learning, social action, and citizenship. Grant placed particular emphasis on the significance of social action and the link between social action and the cultivation of flourishing lives for students.

Dover's (2009) research on teaching for social justice stemming from Carlisle et al. (2006) and grounded in Cochran-Smith's (1999, 2004) six principles of social justice education, specifically focused on secondary ELA classrooms and student outcomes. Dover (2009) integrated social justice education, culturally responsive education, multicultural education, critical pedagogy, and democratic education to research the relationship between social justice

teaching and outcomes for K–12 students. Dover (2009) posited various aspects of the conceptual and pedagogical foundations of social justice teaching are interconnected as they prompt equity and justice. According to Dover (2009), three central categories positively influenced student self-worth and academic progress or achievement: (a) teacher expectations and classroom pedagogy; (b) constructivism, cultural responsiveness, and family engagement; and (c) oppression, equity, and activism instruction. Further, I discuss specific student outcomes of social justice teaching relating to these areas later in this review.

In subsequent work on approaches to teaching for social justice in standards-based ELA contexts, Dover (2016) defined social justice teaching "as the attempt to use one's position in the classroom to promote social and educational reform within and despite repressive educational conditions and mandates" (p. 518). As discussed in Chapter 1, Dover (2013, 2016) conceptualized social justice teaching as comprising of three dimensions: curriculum, pedagogy, and social action. Dover (2013, 2016) presented data from a multistate study that examined how secondary ELA teachers teach for social justice in standards-based schools. Teachers in the study provided examples of their lesson plans to illustrate how they effectively grounded their curricula in justice-oriented concepts while also meeting and surpassing the Common Core College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards (California Department of Education, 2023a). Data elucidated how teaching for social justice in the secondary ELA classroom can be academically rigorous and can promote critical thinking skills embedded in the standards. Lesson plans demonstrated alignment with the following four elements of the Common Core College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards: reading, writing, speaking and listening, and language (California Department of Education, 2023a; Dover, 2016).

Like Grant (2012) and Dover (2016), Styslinger et al. (2019) considered student social action as part of their interpretation of social justice teaching in the ELA classroom. The research explored teaching for social justice to foster students' critical consciousness (Styslinger et al., 2019). Referencing Freire's (2018) central idea of teaching for social justice as a means of raising critical consciousness, Styslinger et al. (2019) defined critical consciousness as "a heightened awareness of the world and the power structures that shape it" (p. 9), suggesting, through inquiry, students can identify inequities and discern contradictions and oppressive structures. Styslinger et al. asserted teachers for social justice use practices to develop students' critical consciousness with the intent of creating change. The researchers, two of whom are self-identified social justice secondary ELA teachers, discussed practices and strategies that promoted critical consciousness such as critical reflection; purposeful text selection; critical reading; perspective taking, including reading multivoiced journals and journaling from different perspectives; text-based exploratory discussion; and social action projects (Styslinger et al., 2019).

Navarro et al. (2020) provided a comprehensive interpretation of social justice education in their critical autoethnography and counternarrative methodology to investigate the push and pull factors that have led social justice teachers to leave their K–12 urban classrooms. Navarro et al.'s conceptualization of social justice teaching in urban schools included the integration of four principles: (a) academic skills, content knowledge, and critical literacy; (b) culturally caring classroom practices; (c) linguistic, cultural, and dynamic practices of students of color and other marginalized groups; and (d) social action beyond the schoolhouse. Navarro et al.'s conceptualization overlapped with many of the concepts found in preceding research, and,

although their research is not ELA specific, they incorporated the essential practice of critical literacy into their framework of social justice teaching.

Another framework rooted in critical literacy is Muhammad's (2020) four-part equity framework for culturally and historically responsive literacy, which highlighted the importance of Black history and culture, specifically Black literacy societies. Muhammad's model for students of color is grounded in the need for identity development, skill development, intellectual development, and criticality and has commonalities with other social justice frameworks explored in this section. Muhammad contended students of color benefit from culturally responsive curricular frameworks rooted in Black history and aimed at supporting their growth. Literacy curricula should be informed by Black contributions that honor Black excellence. Muhammad also posited students of color must understand content from the lens of marginalization to name and combat it.

These are just a few of the frameworks in a wide body of research that have shaped my understanding of social justice education in the secondary ELA classroom. Many of the conceptualizations of teaching for social justice share similar characteristics and have common equity-oriented threads of critical and reflexive pedagogy rooted in Freire's (2018) framework of critical consciousness, dialogic action, reflection, and praxis. They also promote caring, inclusive culturally and linguistically affirming and sustaining practices. Styslinger et al. (2019), Navarro et al. (2020), and Muhammad (2020) address distinct critical literacy practices. The variety of frameworks of social justice teaching potentially have impacted how social justice teaching practices are incorporated into teacher preparation programs and teacher enactment.

Teacher Preparation Programs

According to Alsup and Miller (2014), social justice in teacher education has not been "universally embraced" (p. 196). Though standards affecting educators in various school contexts now support social justice-oriented approaches, the efficacious implementation of justice-oriented standards is contingent upon the commitment of teacher preparation programs to sufficiently train and guide teacher candidates (Matteson & Boyd, 2017). However, there has been considerable debate in teacher preparation programs about how social justice dispositions are defined, how to develop these capacities, and how to best prepare new teachers to teach for social justice (Grant & Agosto, 2008). Grant and Agosto (2008) asserted social justice capacities should reflect the following characteristics from Nieto's (2000) analysis of four teacher education journals that used the term social justice: (a) critical pedagogy, (b) community and collaboration, (c) reflection, (d) social (critical) consciousness, (e) social change and change agents, (f) culture and identity, and (g) analysis of power. Further, social justice-oriented teacher education programs should explicitly define their meaning of social justice and articulate its conceptual tools to assess teacher dispositions or "adjudication of actions" (Grant & Agosto, 2008, p. 186).

Matteson and Boyd (2017) recognized teacher preparation for the integration of social justice concepts with ELA-specific content can be difficult. Preservice secondary ELA teacher candidates should be able to show competence in the fusion of social justice concepts with curricular and lesson planning. Moreover, as classrooms are becoming increasingly diverse, and teachers remain predominantly White, female, middle class, and heterosexual, it is important for

teacher preparation programs to equip preservice teacher candidates with skills to engage and affirm students of all backgrounds (Matteson & Boyd, 2017; Sleeter, 2008).

Researchers in the field have made recommendations for teacher preparation programs to help teacher candidates enact teaching for social justice. Carlisle et al. (2006) emphasized the importance of teacher preparation programs adequately educating preservice teachers about issues of equity such as “racism, sexism, ableism, heterosexism, nationalism, and linguistic privilege” (p. 238). Teachers should understand how to model critical inquiry of inequities and forms of oppression in their schools. Critical self-reflection, an essential practice for sustainable social justice teaching, should be an integral part of teacher preparation programs (Agarwal et al., 2010; Martin et al., 2016). The practice of ongoing critical self-reflection requires consideration of one’s identity and questioning one’s biases, values, and assumptions, contributing to the fostering of social justice teaching dispositions. When teachers engage in their own identity work, they can further explore identity work with their students. In an interview with Adjapong and Porcher (n.d.), Sealey-Ruiz contended teacher preparation programs must be intentional about how they design identity work for their teacher candidates. Sealey-Ruiz asserted self-work, or the racial literacy framework of archaeology of self, is paramount for effectively practicing and sustaining culturally responsive education, an approach which affirms students’ identities and is discussed in more detail later in this review (Adjapong & Porcher, n.d.).

Researchers have evaluated how the theories of social justice taught in teacher preparation programs translate into the classroom, yet there has been a lack of follow-up studies to see how new teachers are implementing social justice into their classroom instruction

(Agarwal et al., 2010). The existing research has included small, qualitative case studies focused on preservice teachers' beliefs rather than on their teaching practices (Pantic et al., 2019). Studies have illuminated how teachers are unclear about what social justice should look like and how to operationalize a social justice curriculum (Agarwal et al., 2010; Burke & Collier, 2017; Pantic et al., 2019). Pantic et al. (2019) recommended teacher preparation programs scaffold opportunities for bettering curricular implementation. Researchers have suggested that teacher preparation programs create social justice scenarios to assist with students making connections between theory and the enactment of social justice teaching practices (Pantic et al., 2019). Matteson and Boyd (2017) proposed teacher candidates role play scenes to practice how they can enact social justice practices in their classrooms.

Some preservice teachers find their coursework is too theory-based, which makes it difficult to apply social justice theoretical principles to practice (Agarwal et al., 2010). To better prepare teachers for social justice teaching, Navarro et al. (2020) recommended teacher educators work with their preservice teachers to align social justice teaching practices with current professional standards and district policies. Teacher educators should prepare their students to create "social justice curriculum guides" and devise "research-based administrator rationales" (Navarro et al., 2020, p. 24). It is also imperative for teachers to have supportive spaces where they can come together to network, discuss their beliefs and obstacles they face in their school settings, and share social justice teaching practices (Burke & Collier, 2017; Navarro et al., 2020). Professional learning committees or critical inquiry projects can serve as safe havens and opportunities for teachers to come together to further their social justice pedagogy and seek solidarity (Burke & Collier, 2017; Picower, 2011; Ritchie, 2012).

Matteson and Boyd's (2017) research focused specifically on preservice preparation for ELA teachers through the engagement of teacher candidates' critical literacies and the development of their critical dispositions. As such, Matteson and Boyd created a framework for text-based critical analysis focusing on eight concepts or lenses: positionality, race, orientation, gender, relationships, environment, social class, and stereotypes (PROGRESS). The text-based methodology served to help teacher candidates generate ideas for how to incorporate these lenses into a justice-oriented curriculum. Matteson and Boyd contended teacher candidates need to know how to use literature to tackle social justice issues by focusing on factors such as positionality and race. Teachers are encouraged to deconstruct texts with their students by evaluating power structures, investigating silences, and considering intersectionality, the very practices that can lead to the cultivation of critical dispositions (Matteson & Boyd, 2017).

It is important to note that additional research and case studies regarding the integration of social justice practices in the classroom could benefit teacher educators, preservice teachers, and in-service teachers (Bender-Slack, 2010; Pantic et al., 2019). However, even if preservice teachers receive adequate training in social justice education, it can be difficult for them to translate this training into practice in their school contexts (Agarwal et al., 2010). Candidates who relay a commitment to social justice beliefs during their preservice preparation can have trouble implementing their vision on the job, especially when confronted with restrictive mandates (Dover, 2016).

Teacher Enactment

It is commonplace for new teachers to face challenges when implementing social justice teaching practices. As a result, teachers might feel powerless in their ability to enact social

justice education because of the limitations of their school systems such as hyperstandardization and restrictive accountability mandates (Bieler, 2012; Dover, 2013, 2016; Navarro et al., 2020; Pantic et al., 2019). While attempting to teach for social justice, teachers can also face opposition from their leadership and school culture, limited materials, and a lack of teaching autonomy. Pantic et al. (2019) described teachers being fearful on the job. Many new teachers are bogged down with the constraints of classroom management and academic instruction based on alignment with standards and high-stakes testing in their first years of teaching (Dover, 2013, 2016; Navarro et al., 2020). Furthermore, if administrators do not see a direct link between social justice teaching and students' test scores or achievement, they might not consider social justice teaching valuable (Carlisle et al., 2006).

According to Malen (1994), teachers must often develop protective strategies when facing resistance from their administration. Using Blase's (1989) typology of learned responses, Malen (1994) depicted teachers' acquiescence "to directives and requests initiated or supported by the principal even though the actions sought and secured may violate their views of ethical practice" (p. 157). Another obstacle to implementation is the fear teachers face of engaging in dialogue with their students around issues of inequity (Bender-Slack, 2010). Bender-Slack's (2010) study on social justice teaching in ELA classrooms indicated some teachers might be concerned about the legal consequences of their teaching or that their students will feel unsafe if they discuss issues of inequity such as race or cultural differences.

Schieble et al. (2020) also pointed out teachers might be reluctant to engage in critical conversations with their students because they might create tensions in their classrooms. Researchers reported White teachers might wrestle with discussing issues of race with their

students because of their own discomfort or lack of racial literacy tools. Further, one teacher reported there is often no training for facilitating critical conversations. Schieble et al. underscored teachers would like more skills and space for reflection in their schools to address obstacles they might face while facilitating discussions centered on race with their students, especially when encountering silence. Teachers must be deliberate about their methods of facilitating discussions on race (Kay, 2018). Though teachers might want to engage in critical discourse, it is challenging for them to remain committed to the practice. Thus, teachers might be vigilant about encouraging contentious dialogue resulting in them retreating or upholding a race-neutral or colorblind stance (Schieble et al., 2020). In addition, parents and/or administrators might not be supportive of dialogue pertaining to race or oppression (Kay, 2018). As a result of these obstacles, teachers can lose sight of teaching for social justice in their first years of teaching.

Despite the challenges of teaching for social justice, consistent professional development in culturally and linguistically responsive and sustaining pedagogy and *persistence strategies*, such as opportunities for critical self-reflection and the creation of sustainable social justice teacher networks, can better support secondary ELA teachers teaching for social justice in a variety of school contexts (Burke & Collier, 2017; Navarro et al., 2020). As noted, teachers benefit from having spaces where they can network and come together to share their beliefs, best practices, and challenges they face in their school settings (Burke & Collier, 2017; Dover, 2016; Picower, 2011). The ongoing sharing of best practices can help teachers develop their social justice dispositions. Moreover, Khalifa et al. (2016) underscored how social justice dispositions can continue to be cultivated over time.

Best Practices

Research literature has identified common curricular and pedagogical practices for meaningful and effective social justice teaching, both in the ELA classroom and other subject areas. Some of these practices include critical or literary theory (e.g., looking at content through multiple lenses), critical literacy, culturally and linguistically responsive and sustaining pedagogy, dialogic teaching, critical dialogue, and social action (Gay, 2002; McLaughlin & DeVoogd, 2004; Navarro et al., 2020; Paris & Alim, 2017; Schieble et al., 2020; Wade, 2004). Students are continually bombarded with information that strives to influence their thinking and "sell their version of the truth" (Appleman, 2009, p. 1). A critical approach to making sense of information and to the investigation of literature requires students to use a multitude of lenses, which builds perspective taking and awareness (Lewison et al., 2002; Wade, 2004). According to McLaughlin and DeVoogd (2004), viewing literature and engaging in dialogue using multiple perspectives expands students' critical thinking and helps them further perspective take as a habit of mind and embrace diverse beliefs. As such, when students try on new perspectives, they might set aside their initial beliefs and become more open to other viewpoints (Thein et al., 2007).

Literary Theory

Much of the literature reviewed focused on critical literacy; however, Appleman (2009) made a compelling case for the use of literary theory in the secondary ELA classroom. Historically, literary theory has mainly been used by educators at the university level; however, Appleman (2009) posited secondary ELA teachers can guide their students to apply literary theories to better understand the world. To do this, students need to grasp how ideologies

influence their understanding. Though some teachers might find literary theory intimidating, its application can provide new ways of thinking, seeing, and knowing as students investigate texts. Students can be exposed to and inhabit multiple theoretical approaches or lenses such as a gender lens, postcolonial lens, or social class/Marxist lens. By investigating and deconstructing literature using various lenses, students can learn to appreciate the power of different perspectives and the cultural forces that shape them. Appleman (2009) also pointed out, although it is vital for teachers to teach multicultural texts from a wide range of voices, it is also important teachers continue to teach canonized texts with the application of literary theory. Appleman (2009) underscored the teaching and examination of literature is not a neutral endeavor. Arguably a form of critical literacy, literary theory ultimately compels students to consider how to approach literature, why certain texts are taught, and what and who decides which literature is considered noteworthy.

Critical Literacy

A critical literacy approach involves the examination of how language and its implications of power or the subjugation of power influence the way students perceive themselves and their relationship to each other and the world. Grounded in critical pedagogy, critical literacy provokes students to question language's power and to investigate how dominant narratives and ideologies are embedded in texts. Through inquiry, teachers and students seek out "how the text operates in underlying powerful ways" (Schieble et al., 2020, p. 16). Students are encouraged to consider whose voices are represented, whose are silenced, whose might be missing, who benefits from a text, how language is used, and how socially constructed identifiers shape stories.

Lewison et al. (2002) suggested there is a range of definitions for critical literacy and provided four dimensions for a conceptualization: (a) disrupting the commonplace, (b) interrogating multiple viewpoints, (c) focusing on sociopolitical viewpoints, and (d) taking action and promoting social justice. Similarly, McLaughlin and DeVoogd (2004) presented principles that foster critical literacy in the classroom: (a) a focus on issues of power and the power of reflection, transformation, and action; (b) a focus on the problematizing; (c) dynamic and adaptable techniques; and (d) the examination of multiple perspectives. Consequently, students are encouraged to seek out perspectives and engage in problem posing, a Freirean (2018) concept in which teachers and students engage in the coconstruction of knowledge. Teachers can deliberately model problem posing and question generation for students as part of critically approaching the teaching of literature (McLaughlin & DeVoogd, 2004). Both Lewison et al. (2002) and McLaughlin and DeVoogd (2004) focused on the importance of students embracing multiple perspectives, taking a critical stance, and engaging in reflection and action.

Naiditch (2010) explored the influence of critical pedagogy on the teaching of reading and the connection between higher level reading skills and social action. Naiditch contended there must be a connection between the text and the real world for reading to be purposeful; this connection can be realized through the encouragement of social action. Critical pedagogy assists readers to move past comprehension toward social engagement. Using Freire's (2002) theory of consciousness as a framework for the evaluation of critical pedagogy and the teaching of reading, Naiditch (2010) outlined components of a classroom with a critical pedagogical framework and identified skills and strategies for learning to read critically. As part of the

deconstruction of texts, students can identify themes that potentially lead to "individual and collective transformation" and the development of social engagement (Naiditch, 2010, p. 95).

Naiditch (2010) demonstrated how Auerbach's (1990) problem-posing steps can be used in a secondary ELA context through a self-taught, literature-based unit relating to sexual orientation. According to Naiditch (2010), assessments should move past students' comprehension of content (i.e., banking education) and result in some form of social action or praxis, thereby demonstrating student empowerment. After students read a coming-of-age story about a gay student, they sought out multiple resources including various forms of media and engaged in social action projects to build awareness about LGBTQIA+ issues in their school community (Naiditch, 2010).

Culturally and Linguistically Responsive and Sustaining Pedagogy

Another practice that has been highlighted in the literature pertaining to social justice teaching in the secondary ELA classroom is the use of a culturally and linguistically responsive and sustaining pedagogy. Since 2000, there has been an increase in published research on culturally responsive leadership and teaching, which is also referred to as culturally and linguistically responsive and sustaining pedagogy (Paris & Alim, 2017). To understand the roots of culturally responsive teaching, it is helpful to examine Ladson-Billings's (1995) influential work that made a case for culturally relevant pedagogy, which is a key aspect of culturally responsive education. Ladson-Billings (1995) argued the importance of implementing culturally relevant pedagogy, particularly for the success of Black students who are often underserved in public schools. There is a discontinuity between students' home experiences and their experiences at school (i.e., linguistic and cultural differences). Therefore, Ladson-Billings (1995)

discussed a theoretical framework for culturally relevant teaching based on cultural competence, academic success, and critical consciousness.

Ladson-Billings (1995) conducted a 3-year study on eight teachers of African American students, which consisted of ethnographic interviews, unannounced classroom observations, video recordings of their teaching, and participation in a research collective. As part of data analysis, Ladson-Billings (1995) revealed commonalities between the teachers including high expectations for students, an emphasis on equity, value in the school community, critical analysis of the curriculum, and passion for their work. These practices led to enhanced student engagement in schooling. Notably, Ladson-Billings (2014) has since reflected on these findings and has supported evolving research on culturally responsive and sustaining practices based on her initial exploration of a culturally relevant approach.

Gay (2002) focused on culturally responsive pedagogy, which stemmed from culturally relevant pedagogy, and underscored teaching students "through their own cultural and experiential filters" (p. 106) as integral to teachers' culturally responsive teaching practices. Gay posited students are more invested in their learning when it is framed in their own experiences. When students' cultural and ethnic diversity is honored, there is increased academic success. Gay identified essential components of culturally responsive teaching, which include (a) culturally relevant curricula, (b) a knowledge base of multicultural content, (c) community care, (d) authentic cross-cultural communication, and (e) responsiveness to ethnic diversity as part of instruction. Gay recommended teachers research the cultural groups of their students and craft curricula that are culturally relevant to them.

Madhlangobe and Gordon's (2012) research focused on culturally responsive leadership, rather than specific teaching practices, but it had common threads to Gay's (2002) work. Many of the themes aligned with culturally responsive teaching practices in the secondary ELA classroom. In a qualitative case study with a focus on affirming minoritized students, Madhlangobe and Gordon's (2012) examined a high school leader in a culturally and linguistically diverse school context and revealed the following themes of social justice leadership behaviors: (a) caring for others, (b) building relationships, (c) being persistent and persuasiveness, (d) being present and communicating, (e) modeling cultural responsiveness, and (f) fostering cultural responsiveness among others. Themes such as caring and building relationships lay the groundwork for student, staff, family, and community engagement, resulting in a reduction of anxiety among students and teachers, trust and respect, and the encouragement and empowerment of student voice (Madhlangobe & Gordon, 2012).

Khalifa et al.'s (2016) synthesized literature on reforming school leadership in urban schools that serve minoritized students and provided an overview of culturally responsive school leadership behaviors essential to enactment, which can also be applied to teaching. Khalifa et al. used a search methodology that focused on articles about culturally responsive school leadership from 1989 to 2014. They examined 37 journal articles and eight books for common themes. Their search for terms related to culturally responsive leadership proved to be problematic as it did not encompass titles with either of the terms "culturally responsive" or "leadership." As a result of their search, Khalifa et al. provided an overview of four key behaviors for culturally responsive leadership: (a) critical self-awareness, (b) culturally responsive curricula and teacher preparation, (c) culturally responsive and inclusive school environments, and (d) student, family,

and community engagement. Khalifa et al.'s first strand of culturally responsive leadership highlighted the necessity for leaders to continuously engage in the practice of critical self-reflection. These behaviors overlap with and echo previously discussed principles and practices of social justice education (e.g., Madhlangobe & Gordon, 2012). Khalifa et al. (2016) also underscored the importance of leaders possessing high expectations, care, and advocacy skills, which is similar to Cochran-Smith's (2004) six-principle framework for social justice teaching.

Culturally responsive practices lead to students feeling recognized and can likely lead to increased motivation, self-worth, and academic engagement and progress (Dover, 2010; Gay, 2002). Examples of sound practices rooted in culturally responsive pedagogy in the secondary ELA classroom include identity exploration and autobiographical work, peer editing, cooperative group learning, and the incorporation of music and movement (Gay, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1995). Love (2013) posited hip-hop critical pedagogy can serve as a cultural lens for students of color to develop critical dispositions and agency.

According to Paris and Alim (2017), culturally responsive teaching can be built upon and surpass teachers' valuing of culturally relevant and responsive schooling. The cultural and linguistic practices of students of color should be further centered and sustained "in a critical, additive, and expansive vision of schooling" (Paris & Alim, 2017, p. 2). Rather than students of color being viewed through a deficit lens, culturally and linguistically sustaining pedagogy shifts the critique to the oppressive practices of traditional schooling. Culturally sustaining pedagogy moves beyond honoring students' cultures and languages; it aims to sustain students' identities and promotes the decentering of Whiteness and the oppressive systems that uphold it (Schieble et al., 2020).

Dialogic Spaces

As discussed in Chapter 1, dialogical action involves two components: reflection and action (Naiditch, 2010). Freire (2018) stressed students can move from object to subject only in dialogical action with the content and teacher. Teachers should urge students to move beyond the understanding of new content and skills; they should invite students into critical reflection through the questioning of assumptions about the world in which they reside. With Freire's (2018) framework for praxis, secondary ELA teachers can use literature to prompt students' reflection on their reading by engaging in a multi-interpretive dialogue of texts and advancing toward further action (Naiditch, 2010).

Critical Dialogue

According to Schieble et al. (2020), dialogic teaching is characterized by the coconstruction of knowledge through collective discourse instead of dialogue that elicits teacher-determined correct answers. The practice of dialogic teaching is grounded in reciprocal, generative discourse. One of the ways teachers can promote multi-interpretive dialogue is by engaging in critical discussions or conversations with their students. Students construct knowledge as they engage in discussion. Research has supported that discussion leads to increased engagement with academic content and promotes student learning (Bomphray, 2018; Schieble et al., 2020). Secondary ELA students who engage in discussion learn more than those who do not have opportunities to participate in this format (Bomphray, 2018). Due to restrictive curriculum and formulaic lesson plans often stemming from accountability mandates, time devoted to high-stakes testing preparation has been prioritized at the expense of class

discussions. In addition, some teachers continue to rely on more traditional methods such as lecture-based teaching.

Schieble et al. (2020) defined critical conversations as the convergence of critical literacy, dialogic teaching, culturally sustaining pedagogy, and social justice-oriented practices that contribute to a critical approach to dialogue about power and privilege and to the cultivation of students' critical consciousness. Critical conversations should aim to dismantle White supremacy and disrupt inequities. When teachers create space to engage with their students in critical dialogue, these discussions further their "students learning and literacy development, sustain their cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and develop the knowledge and skills they need to be agents of change in a democratic society" (Schieble et al., 2020, p. 19).

Critical conversations involve teachers serving as facilitators or sustainers of discussion rather than as leaders of them (Schieble et al., 2020). Discussion is generated by what students previously shared and what might be shared next. Teachers build on students' comments, observations, and questions often leading to deeper, more meaningful discussions. As teachers revoice students' comments instead of responding with judgment, they can sustain exploratory, collaborative dialogue that encourages openness and risk taking. When students are encouraged to learn through discussion, they are more apt to take risks without the fear of being evaluated (Schieble et al., 2020).

Schieble et al. (2020) discussed the importance of student participation during literature-based critical conversations. This mutual exchange can lead to increased student learning in the classroom (Boyd, 2017). Schieble et al. (2020) addressed strategies teachers can use to facilitate critical, reciprocal conversations and move them forward as teachers are often concerned their

questions will not generate discussion, students will not want to participate or interact with one another, or students will be anxious about sharing in a public forum. Teachers can intentionally work with students on the process of how to participate and interact in critical conversations and build community. According to Vetter et al. (2021), teachers can use four types of talk moves to propel critical discussions forward: (a) inquiry talk moves about power and privilege, (b) disruptive talk moves to interrupt and challenge stereotypes, (c) inclusive talk moves to promote inclusion of voices and perspectives, and (d) action talk moves to prompt agency. These strategies are grounded in critical pedagogy and prompt students to consider factors such as what is missing from a text, question dominant ideologies, challenge assumptions and stereotypes, and encourage the inclusion of multiple perspectives, vulnerability and discomfort, and student agency (Vetter et al., 2021).

Kay's (2018) work on race conversations proposed that dialogue focused on race includes beginning with a scaffolded safe space, having intentional "threaded" (p. 120) discussions, and the following three propositions centered on purpose. First, when confronted with a difficult problem, teachers create space and time for their students to "locate their sphere of influence and explore personal pathways to solutions" (Kay, 2018, p. 120). Second, Kay proposed teachers prompt inquiry with their students during discussions involving race. Third, teachers should provide space and invite students to publish or share their work. Further, Kay emphasized teachers should vary students' conversational structures to include formats such as whole-class discussions, small learning communities or cooperative groups, and one-on-one conversations. Dialogic teachers must be deliberate about providing a mix of opportunities for students to engage in meaningful discussions about race. Smaller structures invite students to share openly

as they develop their discussion skills. One-on-one discussions or pair shares can foster interpersonal relationships that are the foundation for larger discussion formats (Kay, 2018).

Student Engagement and Social Action Projects

Freire (2018) emphasized the importance of both reflection and action as part of the process of developing critical dispositions and engaging in dialogical action. Applying a critical lens to literature can result in a greater sense of responsibility toward others and overall student agency (Styslinger et al., 2019). Researchers in the field have argued the investigation of literature should translate into transformative social action (Downey, 2005; Naiditch, 2010). When students engage in social action to work toward change, they become empowered by learning "to read the world" (Naiditch, 2010, p. 102). Social action is a means for students to engage in dialogue and respond to a text. Boyd (2017), Naiditch (2010), and Styslinger et al. (2019) advocated for literature-based social action projects to engage in social action that goes beyond the classroom.

In Boyd's (2017) work on social justice literacies, Boyd asserted not giving students an opportunity to process and respond to a text through social action would be irresponsible. As students become more critically conscious, they can be left feeling powerless or overwhelmed by justice-oriented challenges as they are often complex. Some students can feel consumed with guilt and grapple with how to reconcile their social privilege. Therefore, students can engage in social action projects to metabolize, reflect, and talk back to texts, address issues of inequity, provide space for healing, and further their agency. Though teachers must help their students understand there might not be a panacea for society's ills, students can engage in social action projects with the intention of creating incremental shifts relating to issues of inequity (Boyd,

2017). Teachers can shepherd students as they work to become change agents beyond their classrooms.

Boyd (2017) outlined a method for the implementation of cooperative social action projects in the classroom. Teachers can work with their students to identify initiatives and help them generate plans for their projects. It is essential for students to self-select social issues they want to address so they can take ownership of their work. Boyd asserted teachers empower students by giving them autonomy and agency to select their topic, design their projects, create action steps, and devise ways to work collaboratively to execute their projects. As students conduct their research, teachers can continually assess them and provide them with feedback, rather than solely evaluate their work upon completion. Additionally, self-evaluations are an important aspect of assessment. Boyd provided a process for each phase of social action projects with four steps: contextualizing, organizing, acting, and reflecting (COAR). This COAR framework included a reflective component, which enables students to reflect on their process and continue the cycle of dialogical action: reflection, action, and praxis (Boyd, 2017).

Social Justice Teaching Outcomes

Historically, the lack of agreement on the tenets of social justice teaching and the complexity of how to measure its immediate outcomes have led to limited empirical research on its impact. Thus, there are limitations regarding concrete effects and outcomes (Dover, 2009). Because of this, Carlisle et al. (2006) initially examined studies on social emotional learning and social skills curricula to assess outcomes of student achievement similar to those of social justice teaching. Identified connections between social skills curricula and social and emotional learning programs matched Carlisle et al.'s criteria for social justice teaching. An analysis of over 300

quantitative research studies showed student achievement improved because of social emotional learning programs (Durlak & Weissberg, 2005). Carlisle et al. (2006) also evaluated studies on equity-oriented curricula and interventions on student academic achievement. Unfortunately, the programs evaluated were considered too broad reaching; studies had not implemented a comprehensive evaluation or had lost the necessary funding to complete an evaluation. Therefore, the outcomes were inconclusive regarding practices considered similar to those of social justice teaching. Dover (2009), however, argued social justice teaching can lead to favorable student outcomes while also meeting government accountability mandates.

As a result of inconclusive outcomes relating to social justice, Dover (2009) reviewed empirical research with a focus on outcomes related to teaching ELA through the lens of social justice. Three central areas of social justice teaching were addressed in exploring student outcomes: (a) teachers' expectations and classroom learning opportunities, (b) cultural responsiveness, and (c) explicit instruction about oppression, equity, and activism. Using Cochran-Smith's (2004) six-principle framework, Dover (2009) examined teachers' expectations; teachers' sense of responsibility; the creation of learning communities, particularly cooperative grouping; and the focus on academic skills to bridge gaps resulting in increased student academic achievement. Dover (2009) also emphasized the significance of culturally responsive practices such as the use of culturally relevant content and attention to family and community engagement. According to Dover (2009), the aforementioned teaching practices led to enhanced learning opportunities, increased student achievement, higher self-concepts, greater sense of belonging, identity development, and attitudinal behaviors regarding learning in diverse

contexts. The study also focused on outcomes relating to social justice teaching rooted in the critique of oppression, equity, and activism.

Dover (2009) highlighted several qualitative and quantitative studies grounded in social justice education that resulted in beneficial outcomes for students, such as a summer science enrichment program for first generation 10th grade students that led to increased test scores. Focus group data revealed positive social and educational outcomes. Findings suggested specific instruction on oppression, power, and activism resonated with students. Although the studies Dover (2009) examined demonstrated the potential benefits of teaching for social justice, more studies needed to be conducted on social justice teaching outcomes focused specifically on secondary ELA students. As such, Dover (2010, 2013) conducted a multistate study, referenced in Chapter 1, to examine how secondary ELA teachers teach for social justice in standards-based schools. Dover (2013) explored teacher conceptualizations of social justice teaching as they faced obstacles resulting from restrictive mandates. As part of subsequent work on the relationship between justice-oriented curricula for ELA and literacy and the Common Core College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards (California Department of Education, 2023a), Dover's (2016) called for further research on the implications of social justice teaching in the secondary ELA classroom and literacy development to illuminate its impact.

Conclusion

The literature review identified interpretations of social justice education that have influenced secondary ELA contexts. Cochran-Smith (2004) asserted there are many routes teachers can take to teach through the lens of social justice. Further, social justice-oriented dispositions can be cultivated over time with consistent, sustainable professional development

(Huchting & Bickett, 2021; Khalifa et al., 2016). Best practices identified across much of the literature related to Dover's (2013, 2016) three-pronged framework and Freire's (2018) framework for critical consciousness and dialogical action included the incorporation of literary theory, critical literacy, critical dialogue, culturally and linguistically responsive and sustaining teaching, dialogic teaching, and student social action. These elements of justice-oriented teaching have been shown to positively affect secondary ELA students; however, additional research can clarify how they are operationalized and their impact. Though there has been research on teaching for social justice in the secondary ELA classroom in public school, standards-based contexts, there has been little focus on independent schools, potential sites of justice-oriented innovation. As a result of the examination of this literature, I further explored secondary ELA teachers' conceptualizations of social justice teaching and best practices intended to foster critical consciousness in independent school contexts. I included demographic questionnaires, teacher interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis of teacher-created class syllabi as part of my study.

CHAPTER 3

METHODLOGY

As illustrated in the review of the literature presented in Chapter 2, the secondary English language arts (ELA) classroom is an ideal place for social justice teaching practices, as the investigation of literature can lend itself to a critical approach to teaching (Alsup & Miller, 2014). Though teachers might face obstacles with enactment, there are multiple ways secondary ELA teachers teach for social justice and critically engage their students. Best practices for the cultivation of critical dispositions identified across much of the literature included the incorporation of literary theory, critical literacy, dialogic teaching, critical dialogue, culturally and linguistically responsive and sustaining pedagogy, and social action. Though social justice practices have been shown to positively affect secondary ELA students, additional research can elucidate their impact. Specifically, secondary ELA teachers working in independent schools can illuminate how social justice teaching is conceptualized and enacted to foster critical dispositions.

Research Questions

This study aimed to explore teaching for social justice in the secondary ELA classroom at independent schools in Southern California. I examined secondary ELA teachers' conceptualizations of social justice teaching and best practices intended to foster critical consciousness. According to Stake (1995), case studies should be grounded in two to three iterative research questions. Yin (2015) posited case studies should address the how or why questions of a phenomenon under investigation. Thus, the following research questions guided this study:

1. How do three secondary ELA educators in independent schools each conceptualize and enact social justice teaching?
2. How do three secondary ELA educators' beliefs and practices about social justice teaching intersect with their independent school contexts?

Method

This study was conducted using qualitative methods, specifically a multicase study with demographic questionnaires, semistructured interviews, classroom observations, and document analyses of teacher-created class syllabi. I selected qualitative research as it focused on the investigation of people's stories and their lived experiences. By using a qualitative approach, I intended to reveal the wholeness of social justice teaching in the secondary ELA classroom, and I based my approach on an emergent, iterative framework. Given the fluid, complex nature of social justice teaching, a case study was most appropriate because this methodology uncovered the nuances of social justice teaching. Case studies can be particularistic, descriptive, and heuristic, focusing on a specific phenomenon and providing rich description that can clarify the reader's understanding of the phenomenon (Yazan, 2015).

Because social justice teaching is widely interpreted, a descriptive multicase study of three secondary ELA teachers at independent educational institutions in Southern California was specifically selected to investigate the myriad ways teachers conceptualize and enact justice-oriented teaching practices A multicase study lent itself to revealing how each teacher's positionality and lived experiences impacted their understandings of social justice teaching and the implementation of their practices. I aimed to illustrate cases that provided rich, descriptive data about how secondary ELA teachers interpreted and taught for social justice to foster critical

dispositions in their classrooms. Teachers enacted social justice teaching contingent upon their specific independent school context.

Context

The multicase study took place at two K–12, justice-oriented independent schools and one independent school for Grades 7–12 in Southern California. The number of students at the three schools was relatively small in comparison to public schools in the area. Their enrollment ranged from approximately 500 to 1,100 students. Three progressive independent schools were initially selected for this study because of their self-governance, mission, and commitment to social justice education. However, a teacher from one of the school sites was unable to participate in the study. Therefore, I sought out an additional school rooted in progressive pedagogy, but the request for teacher participation went unanswered. Through my personal network, another local college preparatory independent school for Grades 7–12 was selected, despite not being founded with a justice-oriented philosophy. This adjustment ultimately revealed that examining secondary ELA teachers from a variety of independent schools had implications for English teachers in various school settings.

I chose to examine secondary ELA teachers working in independent schools with the assumption that they are given the liberty to integrate social justice practices into their curriculum. I also selected this context because, as discussed in Chapter 1, Gulla (2021) argued independent schools have contributed to the development of innovative approaches and programs in schooling. Though research has supported the benefits of social justice teaching for marginalized students, I found it necessary to examine how teachers and students at the intersection of privilege and diversity in educational intuitions learn to engage in critical work

because they can leverage their power to affect systemic change (Huchting & Bickett, 2021). As North (2008) asserted, students of privilege must go further than just learning about issues of equity and justice.

Procedures and Participants

As discussed, this study used purposive sampling to target participants who represent social justice-oriented secondary ELA teachers. I also used convenience sampling by accessing my personal network. I am a parent of students at independent schools in Southern California, and I am part of a doctoral program with colleagues and alumni who work in independent schools. I contacted teachers from three progressive independent schools through my network of parents and educational leaders to inform them about the topic of my research and inquired if they might be willing to participate in my study. Participants were provided with the research topic and the voluntary nature of the study prior to and during correspondence. My objective was to select participants who were committed to social justice teaching, who worked in different independent school contexts, and who came from different cultural backgrounds. Data collection occurred from August 2022 to November 2022. Data collection was delayed because of having to find an additional participant. As a result, in October 2022, I contacted additional teachers from other school sites through convenience and snowball sampling. I was introduced to a teacher at an independent college preparatory school for Grades 7–12, and, after our initial correspondence, she informed me she taught middle school humanities, rather than high school ELA. However, she introduced me to a secondary ELA teacher who agreed to participate in my study. As mentioned, though I initially wanted to focus on schools rooted in progressive, justice-oriented pedagogy, adding a school site which was not grounded in a justice-oriented mission

revealed how social justice teaching was conceptualized and realized by teachers across different independent school contexts.

Participants

Participants were asked to fill out confidential demographic questionnaires prior to their first interviews. The purpose of the demographic questionnaire was twofold: (a) it assisted me in describing participants in the research in ways that accurately reflect their social identities, and (b) it helped me understand how participants' backgrounds and school contexts informed their teaching. Teachers could skip any questions they did not wish to answer. I used pseudonyms for the participants and independent schools that are part of this study. A summary of participants' demographic information can be found in Table 1.

Table 1

Teacher Demographics

Teacher	Gender	Pronouns	Race/ Ethnicity	Native language/s	Sexuality	Age	Years teaching	Other identifiers
Adam	Male	He/him/ his	White	English	Heterosexual	43	17	Middle class
Meena	Female	She/her/ hers	Pakistani/ American	English/ Urdu	Heterosexual	48	17	Introvert
Layla	Female	She/her/ hers	Eastern European	English and native language		47	16	Jewish heritage

Adam

Adam identified as a 43-year-old White heterosexual man, and his preferred pronouns were he/him/his. He described himself as "being raised in lower/middle class primarily White communities." His native language is English. He reported having attended a public elementary school, private middle school, and public high school. Adam graduated from a liberal arts college with a bachelor's of arts (BA) in English and earned a master's of fine arts (MFA) in creative writing, specifically nonfiction, from a public university. His teacher preparation

included the following: 10 weeks as part of the Peace Corps to prepare him to teach English at a rural school in a southern African country; a teaching fellowship that consisted of teacher training and working with a teacher mentor; and graduate work experience in which he taught composition and rhetoric to 1st-year undergraduates, took classes in pedagogy, and teamed with "master" teachers.

Adam has continued to engage in professional development to inform his teaching through the California Teacher Development Collaborative, the Bard Institute of Writing and Thinking, and the Right Question Institute. He explained why he became a teacher:

> Growing up, I'd always loved reading, writing, and thinking, and I love continuously learning with my students through these modes. I love the interdisciplinary nature of the study of ELA, and I love witnessing young people's thinking and writing blossom.

Adam has taught in various school contexts: a public school in southern Africa as part of the Peace Corps; a tuition-free "last chance" progressive independent school in Colorado; a public university in Wyoming; and several independent schools in Southern California. He has been teaching for a total of 17 years, with 12 of those years at his current school, Academy of the Arts (AOTA). He described the racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic composition of the student body at his school as being approximately 50% students of color. He stated the school is tuition driven, and, therefore, many families come from upper-class backgrounds. However, approximately 25% of its student body receives some form of tuition assistance, and a significant percentage of the operating budget goes directly to tuition assistance.

Layla

Layla identified as a 47-year-old Eastern European woman, and her preferred pronouns were she/her/hers. She spoke her native language and English. From preschool through eighth grade, she was educated in Eastern Europe. She moved to Southern California for ninth grade and moved back to Eastern Europe for 10th and part of 11th grade. She finished her high school education in Southern California. Layla received her BA in Southern California, her master's of arts (MA) in Eastern Europe, and her doctoral degree in the United Kingdom. She taught English as a second language for 5 years in Eastern Europe and learned to teach secondary English on the job at Wood Acres College Preparatory School (WACPS) in Southern California. She also received professional development at an East Coast summer institute through a university school of education. She has taught at WACPS for 11 years. She described the racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic composition as being mostly White, 50–60% Jewish, approximately 10% mixed race, approximately 5–10% Black, approximately 10% Asian, and less than 5% Latinx.

Meena

Meena identified as a 48-year-old heterosexual Pakistani-American or Asian-American woman, and her preferred pronouns were she/her/hers. Another way she identified herself was an "introvert." Her native languages are Urdu and English. Meena received a BA in English and religious studies, and two MAs in religious studies and Middle Eastern studies. She also earned a single-subject teaching credential in English. Meena has taught secondary English for 17 years. She began her teaching career teaching a summer creative writing workshop for high school students while she was a graduate student. This teaching experience led her to pursue a teaching credential. She taught freshman writing classes at a University of California school and

proceeded to teach English classes at a Southern California public school for 4 years. She has taught at her current school, High Point (HP), for 13 years. She described the racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic composition of the HP student body as being "diverse." She stated, "students are Black, White, Latinx from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds with fewer students of Middle Eastern, Asian, and South Asian origin."

Data Collection

Preeminent scholars in the field of qualitative case study research recommend gathering data from multiple sources to provide a complete picture of the phenomenon (Yazan, 2015). I collected data from multiple sources of evidence: a confidential, researcher-created demographic questionnaire; confidential semistructured interviews; classroom observations and field notes; and teacher-created syllabi. By collecting different forms of data, and triangulating it, the trustworthiness of the findings was increased (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Additionally, throughout the duration of the study, I maintained a researcher journal to map connections across cases, record my unresolved questions, and reflect on and process my findings.

Demographic Questionnaire

Participants were given a confidential, demographic questionnaire via email to be completed prior to their first interviews (see Appendix A). Questions were open ended to elicit participants' social identifiers, background information, and teaching experience. Questions were designed to make participants as comfortable as possible. Data collected from the questionnaire were used to analyze how teachers' identities, backgrounds, and teaching experiences informed their understanding and operationalization of social justice teaching in the secondary ELA classroom.

Interviews

I conducted interviews with three secondary ELA teachers working at three different school sites. Interviews took place individually for approximately 45 minutes via Zoom (www.zoom.us). Interviews were recorded and Zoom transcriptions were then transferred and edited in Google documents. The process of interviewing created meaningful opportunities for relationship building between me and my participants. Through inquiry, I had the opportunity to elicit substantive, descriptive data during the interview process. Confidential, semistructured interviews were used to generate in-depth, iterative participant responses (Stroh, 2015). During the interview process, I self-disclosed my positionality as a parent of children at independent schools and as having previous teaching experience in the secondary ELA classroom to address any concerns about bias (Patten & Newhart, 2017) and so participants felt supported rather than critiqued during the study (Michael, 2015). As a former secondary ELA teacher and teacher mentor, I approached data collection from a lens of solidarity.

Semistructured interviews were broken up into three segments and consisted of demographic questions, open-ended questions grounded in the participants' experiences, and theoretically based questions (see Appendix B). Three segments afforded a dialogic space for me and the participants to reflect on responses to interview questions, revisit previous points, and discuss classroom observations to generate meaning (Galletta & Cross, 2013). I was mindful of both reciprocity and reflexivity during my interviews, thereby increasing the credibility of my analysis (Galletta & Cross, 2013; Yin, 2014).

The first semistructured interviews with participants took place prior to classroom observations and aimed to obtain participants' personal background information, their teacher

preparation, their teaching contexts, their conceptualizations of social justice teaching, and their perceptions of important aspects of teaching for social justice in the secondary ELA classroom (Seidman, 2019). The second semistructured interviews took place shortly after the first classroom observations and covered aspects of participants' teaching including objectives for the school year, curriculum, text selection, justice-oriented teaching practices, activism, and specific objectives of the lessons observed. The third semistructured interviews took place after the second classroom observations and served as a space to reflect on best practices and what was taught and observed to make meaning of the participants' experiences (Seidman, 2019). The third interview covered topics including critical self-reflection, teacher collaboration, and professional development. In addition, the third interview addressed the second research question of the study pertaining to how the governance structure of independent schools and factors such as school culture affected participants' justice-oriented practices. Specifically, teachers were asked about possible tensions of engaging in social justice teaching in a privileged educational context.

Classroom Observations

Two classroom observations were conducted seeking evidence for social justice teaching practices, implicit and explicit critical engagement, and emerging themes. Each participant was observed twice for approximately 1 hour. The same class was observed during both observations. A priori codes, grounded in Dover's (2016) three-dimensional framework for teaching for social justice in the secondary ELA classroom (curriculum, pedagogy, and social action) and the NCTE's (2021) teacher preparation standards, were established before data analysis and integrated into a researcher-created observation tool (see Appendix C). Codes included the

following categories: text selection, culturally and linguistically responsive and sustaining curriculum, antiracist and antibias teaching, lens work/literary criticism, critical literacy, inclusive caring environment, critical dialogue, student-centered discussion, active listening, inquiry-based discussion, perspective taking, critical reflection, critical engagement/challenging inequities, social action projects, and activism. I recorded field notes on the observation tool and integrated them into the data analysis. While collecting data, I sat in the back of the classroom as a nonparticipant observer to be as inconspicuous or unobtrusive as possible. In two instances, I sat beside small groups of students as they discussed what was assigned by their teachers. As such, the data reflected the authentic behavior of the teacher and students (Patten & Newhart, 2017).

Syllabi Analyses

I analyzed teacher-created class syllabi by evaluating curricular content including text selection, guiding objectives, class expectations and policies, and assessments as indicators of social justice practices. My analysis focused on how class syllabi reflected participants' interpretations of social justice teaching and evidence of best practices as discussed in the review of literature and participants' interviews. As the documents were analyzed, I recorded memos for emergent themes and data that supported what was discussed during the interviews and documented during the observations.

Data Analysis

Data collected from the demographic questionnaires, interview process, classroom observations, and the examination of teacher-created class syllabi used ongoing inductive analysis and a priori codes to identify emerging categories. Interview transcription memos were

written to summarize the data, document emergent themes, and record questions about the findings. As I went through the coding process, I used comparative analysis to arrive at commonalities and differences of participants' perceptions and enactment of social justice teaching in their practice and the structural aspects which impact it. After analyzing each case, I looked across all cases to further investigate overlaps between them. Next, I analyzed my observation field notes and teacher-created class syllabi to triangulate the data. Once data were written up, coded, and triangulated, member checking took place. I shared findings with my participants to obtain feedback of my interpretation of the data, to coconstruct meaning, and, thus, strengthen trustworthiness (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). It is important to note, as previously mentioned, I aimed to approach data analysis from a supportive stance, a place of camaraderie with my teacher participants and an understanding of being lifelong learners, while not compromising areas of needed growth for teachers and schools (Michael, 2015).

Limitations

As discussed in Chapter 1, five limitations pertained to this qualitative study on teaching for social justice in the secondary ELA classroom. The first limitation was based on the sample size of the participants in this study. Because there were a limited number of cases in the study, though findings may be transferrable, they are not generalizable to all secondary ELA teachers across independent schools. Second, because the study took place at independent schools, the participants' responses were not representative of all secondary ELA teachers teaching for social justice in a variety of educational contexts. Third, the study was limited to three teachers who believed in social justice teaching and were willing to participate in the study. Fourth, as social justice teaching has many interpretations, participants' responses were not representative of all

secondary ELA teachers' justice-oriented practices. Fifth, the study focused on selected practices from preceding research; as a result, because there are many practices associated with social justice teaching, the study did not comprise all the practices that foster critical dispositions or consciousness in the secondary ELA classroom.

Delimitations

This study was delimited to a small sample of secondary ELA teachers in Southern California from three independent schools. Additionally, this study was also delimited to teacher interviews, therefore excluding student voice. Student interviews would have provided great insight into the impact of social justice teaching; however, it would have been challenging to receive approval for interviews with participants under the age of 18. The study was also delimited to the use of virtual interviews, which potentially affected teachers' responses. Finally, this study was delimited to a specific time frame of the 2022–2023 school year.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

There was a gap in the research concerning social justice teaching in the secondary English language arts (ELA) classroom in independent schools. The purpose of this qualitative study was to address this gap by presenting and comparing cases of three secondary ELA teachers in a variety of independent schools in Southern California to learn how they perceived and implemented social justice teaching in their practice. Dover's (2013, 2016) three-dimensional framework of curriculum, pedagogy, and social action was the primary driver of my examination of how secondary ELA teachers conceptualized social justice teaching and the practices they employ with their students to cultivate critical consciousness. This study also sought to illuminate how independent school contexts shaped and impacted teachers' justice-oriented curricular and pedagogical practices. It aimed to examine how structural aspects such as governance, policies, and mission, and factors such as school culture influenced teachers' understandings and enactment of justice-oriented practices.

Research Questions

This study was guided by the following questions:

1. How do three secondary ELA educators in independent schools each conceptualize and enact social justice teaching?
2. How do three secondary ELA educators' beliefs and practices about social justice teaching intersect with their independent school contexts?

To investigate these questions, qualitative data were collected through confidential demographic questionnaires, confidential semistructured interviews with teachers, classroom

observations, and a document analysis of teacher-created class syllabi. Chapter 3 provided the research design and methodology of the study including the context, procedures, participants, data collection, analysis plan, and review of the limitations and delimitations. Chapter 4 presents critical findings from my examination of how teachers conceptualized and enacted social justice teaching and how their school sites impacted their practices. I begin Chapter 4 by discussing data yielded from each of the three cases' demographic questionnaires, interviews, classroom observations, and teacher-created class syllabi. I then present my analysis of cross-case themes based on the two research questions that guided this study.

Adam

Adam relayed, as a student, he had the privilege of seeing himself in the literature he examined, the people who taught him, and the writers he was exposed to from the traditional canon. He pointed out that he was taught as someone from an overrepresented group to critically question and examine norms that "we hold to be true and are part of daily life:"

> When I think about myself and my identity and my experiences, I see myself as needing to examine things and to question things, and to think critically about things. I think that's inherent, and what we need of White people and people in overrepresented capacities to do. I think that's what's going to make social change is if everyone is questioning and thinking about equity and justice.

Adam became an educator because he saw teaching as a way to serve others. His father was a Presbyterian minister in mainly conservative communities; however, Adam considered his father to have been the most liberal and progressive person in the communities he served. For example, Adam pointed out his father accepted gay marriage long before his congregants. Because of his

father's influence, Adam's views about social justice were initially shaped by the church. After completing his undergraduate degree, Adam joined the Peace Corps and taught English through AIDS awareness programming in Africa. He initially viewed teaching with a social justice orientation to be serving a community of need:

> I kind of came through to thinking about teaching with social justice, not as a topic that I learned about in school but working in a community that had serious needs at the time and trying to make education address those.

Teaching Experience

Adam taught at several independent schools before he worked at Academy of the Arts (AOTA). He selected the independent school context because he was not credentialed to teach in public schools. Adam chose to teach at AOTA because of its emphasis on the arts and the freedom teachers are given by the school's leadership. The social-emotional and creative aspects of the school's philosophy resonated with him as well. Though he worked at several independent schools prior to AOTA, he has felt the most "authentic" in his teaching at AOTA. He stated the school "matches most to who he is as a person." Despite students being individually involved with service programs, he has wanted to see students engage in more meaningful service work that impacts the greater community. Adam explained, "there's this difference between the school's focus [which] is very much on the individual and I feel at times we forget the community . . . we've forgotten that we're part of the whole."

Social Justice Teaching

When asked to define social justice teaching or if Adam considered himself to be a teacher for social justice, he preferred not to label himself because labels did not feel "authentic"

to him and made him uncomfortable. He defined a social justice educator as someone who teaches social justice issues. Adam shared, “You’re only a social justice educator to the extent you teach social justice, and I don’t know what that bar is personally and so I have a lot of trouble, it doesn’t feel comfortable to label myself.” He continued to speak about his discomfort with labels such as “antiracist” and emphasized that social justice teaching should be based on educators’ actions:

> I think I struggle with a lot of the maybe posturing that happens in the wake of violence against people of color, any marginalized group, where then all of a sudden, if everybody’s saying they’re an antiracist educator, and, like education isn’t really changing then, is anybody an antiracist educator? I just really struggle philosophically with those things. . . . It’s less about the label and more about the action.

Adam considered teaching for social justice to be centered on the actions teachers take to examine what is happening in the world and bringing this examination into the classroom. Adam stated teaching for social justice in the secondary ELA classroom “looks like kind of taking stock of what’s happening in the world today and asking students to study that, reflect on it.” He has executed this by exploring texts with his students which are relevant to what is currently happening in the world. As such, Adam has taught Hamid’s (2017) *Exit West* in response to ongoing immigration issues, which also connected to the Ukrainian refugee crisis stemming from the war that broke out in February 2021. He selected A. Smith’s (1994) *Twilight Los Angeles 1992* in response to the George Floyd protests during 2020. While students read *Twilight Los Angeles 1992,* they were asked to consider the historical context at the time the book was written and apply it to what was happening during the 2020 Black Lives Matter protests. Upon

completion of the text, students were asked to interview community members about their experiences during the June 2020 protests and to create an updated "Twilight Los Angeles 2.0." Adam pointed out he had the freedom to shift and pivot his text selection in response to the racial justice movement because of the autonomy he has had at an independent school like AOTA. He has been able to select texts that mirror "the social justice message [he] want[s] to give" his students.

Objectives for Students

As part of Adam's class syllabus, he listed goals for his course which included the development of reading, writing, and communication skills; the discovery of connections between texts and students' lived experiences; and a deeper awareness of perspectives, which are pedagogical practices that contribute to critical literacy skills. There was also an emphasis on the construction, deconstruction, evaluation, and synthesis of ideas that stem from thinking. As evidenced from Adam's class syllabus, he valued the evolutionary nature of learning stating that "reading, writing, thinking, and discussing (and existing) are growth processes" and that "it's okay to be developing skills, to be wrong, and to make mistakes." In addition, in his syllabus, he encouraged his students to be forgiving of one another and themselves as they challenge their evolving consciousness. When asked what Adam would like his students to come away with after teaching them, he would like his students to have a deeper understanding of themselves and the worlds in which they live "so they can actively build themselves and their worlds up."

Building Relationships

Building relationships has been the bedrock of Adam's approach to teaching for social justice in the secondary ELA classroom, which he pointed out has also been prioritized at

AOTA. As evidenced during my classroom observations, Adam devoted time to engage in casual conversations with his students before starting class. He also developed rapport with his students by checking in with them individually during class time. Adam felt building a community of trust is imperative for students to authentically share with their classmates and engage in meaningful conversations:

> We had some really intense conversations about race when reading *Twilight: Los Angeles 1992* [Smith, 1994] and thinking about Rodney King and thinking about George Floyd, thinking about everything in between, so it's all about trust, so that students can share their authentic selves and be challenged authentically and be willing to learn new things.

When asked how Adam built trust with his students so they can participate in "authentic" conversations as a collective, he shared that students were accustomed to having open dialogue as it was part of the nature of the school. AOTA has had a life skills curriculum integrated into all grades in which students practice being in conversation as part of council. During council, students sit in a circle and pass a talking stick around as they share their perspectives and feelings about different topics. Adam relayed he has provided opportunities in his classroom beginning at the start of the year for students to reflect on themselves and share their reflections with their peers. For example, at the beginning of the school year, his 10th grade students were asked to write about the major understandings that make up their consciousness and to create an art piece that signified aspects of their consciousness. Students reflected on how their identities informed their consciousness and shared their reflections with their classmates. By engaging in this type of identity work through the lens of consciousness and sharing their reflections with their peers, Adam has aimed for his students to build rapport, recognize their intersecting

identities, and develop empathy and trust to promote deeper conversations over the course of the school year.

Coming to Consciousness

Adam's 10th grade English curriculum has been grounded in the theme of "coming to consciousness." In his class syllabus introduction, he provided Merriam-Webster's (n.d.) definition of consciousness, "the quality or state of being aware especially of something within oneself," and stated students examine texts that focus on the "promise and peril of coming to consciousness." Throughout the school year, this theme undergirds students' exploration of literature. Adam articulated this exploration prompts his students to have a better understanding of "how they think about things, how they come to understand things, and how they need to develop their thinking." The following are examples of curricular units underpinned by this theme. The first unit of the school year was based on how characters' consciousness evolved over time in Hamid's (2017) *Exit West*. While students investigated this text, they looked at issues that migrants and refugees face when leaving their homelands. Students also investigated Kincaid's (2000) *A Small Place* to examine the importance of place and how Kincaid researched and wrote about place. Students were asked to select and write about a place that was meaningful to them. Adam's second unit was focused on prompting students to think about the importance of multiple perspectives. Students explored Adichie's (2009) TED Talk: *The Danger of a Single Story* before reading A. Smith's (1994) *Twilight Los Angeles 1992.* By examining different people's perspectives about the LA riots, students learned about the power of perspective taking. They conducted community interviews to garner how each person's perspective contributed to

students' understanding of the tensions in Los Angeles during the aftermath of the Rodney King verdict.

Curriculum and Text Selection

Since Adam started working at AOTA, the English department has broadened its ELA curriculum to include more texts that reflect the lives and experiences of their students. There has been a purposeful evolution to incorporate texts representing multiple intersectional voices, texts prompting students to pose difficult questions of themselves, and a departure from texts which were considered canonical. Adam's syllabus indicated his commitment to an inclusive curriculum. Many of the texts he selected were written from a diversity of voices: "Allegory of the Cave" by Plato (Biffle, 1995), *Exit West* by Hamid (2017), *A Small Place* by Kincaid (2000), "To Science" by Poe (1894), "The World is Too Much with Us" by Wordsworth (1994), *February in Sydney* by Komunyakaa (1989), *The Danger of a Single Story* by Adichie (2009), *Twilight Los Angeles 1992* by A. Smith (1994), *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* by Anzaldúa (1987), and *How to Write an Autobiographical Novel* by Chee (2018). The texts, representing a variety of genres, such as books, poems, essays, plays, and TED talks, and a blend of classical, canonical poets with more contemporary texts address issues of race, class, and sexuality and themes relating to identity and perspective taking.

Adam noted the curricular change process has not been easy, describing the changes as an "evolution." He explained how defining and redefining the canon has been a "question that we've wrestled with and struggled with over the years . . . [and developed the] understanding that we need to offer texts that reflect the lives and experiences of our students and their peers." Adam described an experience he had early in his career at AOTA, in which an Asian-American

student confided he had not read a single book by an Asian-American writer during his 4 years of high school. This “huge blind spot on our [the school’s] part” led to teachers developing curricular “touch points” representing different cultures in literature. However, he noted the tensions inherent in this change, “what we don’t want to do is tokenize. . . . [We] don’t want to say, here’s the real stuff [canonical literature]. And then here’s all the stuff [multicultural literature].” Instead, Adam pointed out, “they have to go hand-in-hand.” Adam also noted, in the future, many of the contemporary books students read at AOTA will ultimately be considered canonical because they are “texts that are driving culture and asking us hard, tough questions . . . asking us to pose tough questions of ourselves in our times.”

Adam was unsure if he and his colleagues had a measured mechanism for making their curricula more inclusive and recognized this as a challenge. He suggested in an ideal world they would workshop their book lists perhaps with students, teachers, parents, and alumni to elicit suggestions for text offerings. However, he recognized workshopping his text offerings could potentially be difficult to execute given the current structure of teaching. He felt it is arrogant that he or his team get to choose the books students read and voiced that he understood the power teachers wield in making decisions regarding text decisions.

Literature-Based Activities

Adam implemented social justice teaching practices rooted in literature-based activities. He referenced activities relating to his unit on *Exit West* (Hamid, 2017), which focused on “what it meant to be a refugee, who refugees typically are, where they are, and why they leave their native countries.” Using a backpack activity modeled from the Human Rights Watch Student Task Force (n.d.), students wrote about what they would bring with them if they only had one

night to pack a backpack before leaving their homes. They were asked to write about the significance of each item they packed using Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Students were also asked to read interviews of refugees from Syria, central Africa, and Ukraine and connect those narratives to *Exit West* (Hamid, 2017).

Another example of a literature-based activity connected to social justice involved students learning about magical realism in *Exit West* (Hamid, 2017). During a classroom observation, Adam and his students investigated magical realism as a genre and examined elements of magical realism as tenor-less metaphors. Adam emphasized two primary points: (a) magic realism as a genre allows for social critiques because it causes readers to question accepted realities, and (b) magical realism is often used to fight oppression and has roots in anticolonial movements. Students practiced creating sentences with elements of magical realism and discussed how to examine and look for elements of magical realism in their reading. Adam used inquiry and posed the following questions to connect his lesson to the central theme of the year, coming to consciousness: (a) what is the tenor of the magical component, and (b) what accepted reality are we becoming more conscious of through the use of tenor-less metaphors.

Classroom Environment

Adam referenced the importance of building relationships when responding to how he created a supportive caring classroom environment. Adam articulated he fosters connections in his classroom through a discussion-based approach that encourages pair sharing, free-write responses, and engaging in identity work:

> We want to be able to ask questions dangerously, but not in danger. . . . How do I set that up? . . . [How do I] build relationships with students and each other? . . . by getting them

> to share their unique, authentic selves. And that's as simple as them pair sharing those focused free-write prompts. It could be an analytical question about the novel, or it could be [a question like] . . . "what do you feel is the most important aspect of your identity?" when we're talking about identity. And so just getting them to be comfortable sharing those things . . . listening to each other and knowing each other.

Adam contended he has created a space that affirms and sustains intersecting identities by selecting literature in which students can see their lived experiences and those of their peers. He also indicated he has aimed for his students to be comfortable with sharing their identities and those intersections, which is a process beginning with the exploration of questions including: "Who are you, what's your consciousness, how does place define your consciousness, and what are all the other stories that are out there that aren't your own consciousness?"

Through relationship-based teaching, Adam described how he scaffolded potentially contentious literature-based discussions, allowing students to "understand intent and impact" and unpack their ideas "without fear of judgment." He did this by requiring students to provide evidence from literature to support their interpretations and by honing their inquiry skills. As seen during his second observation, students in Adam's class were taught to understand the difference between clarifying questions, interpretative questions, and evaluative questions. During a classroom observation, students engaged in a focused free read, annotated the assigned pages, and generated three types of questions (clarifying, interpretative, and evaluative) from their reading to help them develop their comprehension and discussion skills.

Discussion Models

When Adam was asked how he created space for classroom discussions and if there were any protocols or scaffolding in place to support critical dialogue, he referenced the importance of building relationships, particularly during the first few months of school, and having a “shared vocabulary” for discussing topics as a class. He then discussed using a student-centered discussion model based on the Harkness method (Phillips Exeter Academy, n.d.) to ground his classroom conversations. The Harkness method is student driven; therefore, the teacher serves as a facilitator, rather than the leader or driver of a class discussion. Through this methodology, students learn the importance of listening and observing how they take up space. More extroverted students are encouraged to give space, whereas more introverted students are encouraged to contribute to the discussion. Students learn to map out discussions and reflect on the types of insights their peers contribute during discussions.

Adam indicated the Harkness method (Phillips Exeter Academy, n.d.), a tool for discussions rooted in the curriculum, along with the council component of the school’s life skills curriculum have provided the scaffolding for students to engage in open dialogue:

> We also use the Harkness method [Phillips Exeter Academy, n.d.] where I will totally be outside [the circle]. We’ll map out the conversation. We’ll talk about the types of points that people made. . . . I think all of those skills kind of come together, in which we can have very productive conversations about race where students feel like they can call each other in or out.

Adam also highlighted the integral role the council component of the school’s life skills curriculum has played in providing scaffolding for open discourse.

> I mean this is all very complicated, but there was an incident on campus, [which] students were up in arms about. And so those were the days where we just didn't teach anything. And we had these conversations where we were like, and I didn't know all the facts, nobody knew all the facts, but students needed to talk about this. And so we had to give them that space. And the way that we scaffolded those conversations is that the school offers life skills classes where we all, they are trained, the students are trained to sit in council, and to speak from the heart, to be lean, all this stuff, right? And I think that that's the scaffolding that happens, that's what we rely upon in those types of conversations which honestly happen all the time. This is the same thing that we did after George Floyd's murder. . . . But again, I have to go back to, none of those will work if we weren't doing that relationship-based work in the first couple of months of school.

Social Action and Activism

Despite his interest in social justice issues, Adam has not assigned explicit social action projects as part of his curriculum. His assessments, however, related to issues of social justice. For example, the *Twilight Los Angeles 1992* unit's final assessment involved students choosing an event they were interested in better understanding, writing a play based on the event, and modeling it after *Twilight Los Angeles 1992* (Smith, 1994). Through this assessment, students were asked to reflect on why and how different perspectives illuminated their understanding of the event.

As discussed, Adam grappled with labels. Hence, when asked if he considered himself to be an activist, he responded by saying:

> I'm only an activist when I'm actively activist-ing. I do consider myself a socially conscious teacher and educator in person because I'm always asking questions, and I'm always trying to think of things from different perspectives and empathize and all that. So, if that is activism, then I'm an activist. But I struggle.

Although Adam did not label himself as an activist, he considered himself to be a socially conscious teacher who prioritizes inquiry, perspective taking, and empathy. More broadly, he considered the practice of inquiry foundational to social justice teaching.

Critical Self-Reflection

Adam discussed three primary opportunities for critical self-reflection at AOTA: (a) the school's diversity, equity, and inclusion office (DEI); (b) professional development; and (c) the school's Social Justice Institute. He explained that AOTA's DEI office team offered monthly training during faculty meetings, met with academic departments individually, and worked with faculty and staff of color and White antiracist affinity groups during their meeting times. Through allotted professional development money, the DEI office funded Adam's attendance at an "Unmasking Whiteness" workshop last summer. According to the workshop organizers, the series was described as a space for:

> White people to deepen their self-awareness and build community with other white people taking up work for racial justice. Through personal reflection, small and large group dialogue, and experiential activities, this institute invites the exploration of subjects such as the meaning of whiteness, White privilege and multiple identities, how to resolve guilt and shame, institutional racism, and development of an anti-racist practice and identity. (Alliance of White Anti-Racists Everywhere, Los Angeles, n.d., para. 2)

Additionally, the DEI office offered a 3-day curriculum training, organized by the Museum of Tolerance, for the English department on K–12 social justice standards and frameworks. Adam felt the training was “super important” for his development as an educator. Although he felt his school leadership was hands-off, with a “You do you; we’ll do us” attitude, when it comes to teaching for social justice, the school community was socially aware and deft at identifying needs for social justice education:

> We’re a very socially aware school, and they’re always opportunities where we need to kind of step up and step forward. An example would be today we just got an email about the rise in antisemitic incidents . . . and I mean already, they’re [the school’s administration] identifying three action steps that are going to happen over the next couple of weeks with different affinity groups meeting up and taking the lead . . . I feel like that’s what AOTA does well, they’re aware of what’s happening in the world, and by making us aware it’s like, [asking] what are we gonna do?

Tensions of Teaching in a Privileged Context

Adam relayed the school culture at AOTA has been consistently supportive of social justice teaching. However, Adam pointed out there have been tensions teaching in a privileged context. Adam stated the tensions felt were related to navigating guilt and fragility, specifically White and class fragility (i.e., the state of experiencing defensiveness about one’s race or class). Another tension he pointed out resulted from the imbalance of non-White or nonheteronormative students in the classroom. He indicated, although there are approximately 50% students of color at AOTA, that statistic represented students from many different ethnicities and cultures. Thus, Adam explained, “sometimes it feels like we only have one or two Black students” in class,

making it difficult to have open and honest conversations because of this imbalance. He remembered instances when comments from White students, which Black students may or may not have agreed with, were met with silence in the classroom, indicating to him those students—both Black and White—were uncomfortable pushing back or questioning problematic statements. As a White teacher, Adam felt conflicted during these instances, unsure if he should step in and interrupt these statements or respect students' choices to remain quiet. He has attempted to navigate this tension in his classroom by building relationships with his students and by promoting inquiry and perspective taking. Although these tensions persist, he maintained that independent schools must be sites for justice.

Layla

Layla's approach to teaching has been informed by her experiences with antisemitism and her departure as an adolescent from her country in Eastern Europe while it was torn apart by nationalism and a civil war. While growing up in Eastern Europe, she would often hear disparaging antisemitic remarks made in front of her about Jews as people did not realize she was of Jewish heritage. She suspected they made this assumption because she did not have a Jewish last name. Confronting antisemitism shaped her teaching, particularly the way she has related to students from other marginalized groups. Layla relayed she can relate to being one of the few Black or Latinx students in her classroom because she was the only student with Jewish heritage at her school. She voiced frustration about there being so few Latinx students at Wood Acres College Preparatory School (WACPS) because the school is in a city that has a significant Latinx population.

Teaching Experience

Although Layla did not receive any formal training in education prior to teaching at WACPS, she learned how to create lessons while teaching English in Europe as a doctoral student. Layla initially aspired to be a professor at the university level; however, there were few tenure-track positions available when she completed her doctorate. She secured a job at WACPS through a friend; she did not select the school because of its mission or philosophy. She noted that initially she thought she should teach at a charter or public school, but she did not think she "could physically take on having 150 to 200 students."

Shortly after Layla started teaching at WACPS, she received training at an institute on how to be "intentional and mindful" about issues of equity such as race, class, gender, and sexual orientation. The institute focused on race but did not address intersectionality. The institute taught her "specific language" and exposed her to texts she could examine with her students and colleagues. While attending the training, she read texts from different voices and perspectives. Layla also developed her teaching by reading books on pedagogy and attending professional conferences such as the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) annual convention.

Social Justice Teaching

When Layla was asked if she considered herself to be a teacher for social justice, she said she would have responded yes had she been asked a couple of years ago; however, she was now more pessimistic. Her perspective shifted not necessarily because of her students or her school but because of the polarized climate in the United States. Part of her conceptualization of social justice teaching connected to activism and creating change:

> Many of the things I do, or many of the texts I choose, and some activities we do makes the students . . . more informed about various social justice issues. . . . Am I successful in making them activists who affect change? That I'm not so sure about. That I think is an area of growth.

Social Justice Teaching in the Secondary ELA Classroom

Layla considered social justice teaching in the secondary ELA classroom to be about exposing students to voices, viewpoints, and cultures different from the dominant narrative and giving her students tools to examine and discuss them. Layla wanted to open students' eyes to multiple perspectives. She believed classical, canonical texts should not be put on a pedestal and stressed the importance of approaching canonical texts in complex ways when reading them. Layla relayed she has used literary criticism as a tool to approach literature, and she has taught her students to analyze texts using lens work such as the formalist, deconstructionist, postcolonial, Marxist, psychoanalytical, and feminist lenses. In her advanced placement (AP) literature class, she has not required her students to apply one particular lens; students have been able to choose, leading to varied perspectives during discussions. Layla reflected:

> [There are] multiple ways of looking at text and the world; there isn't just a single one. . . . I tell them [my students], you know, I introduce you guys to these lenses. It looks like they're [the perspectives] living in these silos, but in fact, in real scholarship, people use multiple [lenses], and they're intersectional in a lot of ways. . . . And they get there by the end of the year.

Layla referenced Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (Shakespeare & Miola, 2019) as an example of a text she and her students critically examined in her AP literature class using a variety of lenses.

She and her students explored the misogyny and classism embedded in the play. She also discussed teaching Kafka's (n.d.) "A Report to an Academy," a short story written from the perspective of an ape who has assimilated to the human world; she and her students connected the character's experience to stories of Jewish assimilation in Europe, the forced assimilation of Africans through slavery, and LGBTQIA+ assimilation in a heteronormative world. By exposing students to a multiplicity of identities outside of their own and by giving students the methodologies with which they can examine the world, she has aimed for her students to become aware of the existence of other identities beyond their immediate environment. Layla explained when students have tools to discuss issues of class, race, gender, and sexuality, they can examine the media they consume and better navigate their own lives. She would like her students to see both the commonalities and differences they, their families, and their communities have with others' experiences through literature. Layla explained how "it's like the windows and mirrors," referencing the idea that literature can provide insight into others' lived experiences like windows or reflect one's own lived experiences like a mirror, thereby "[moving] students toward more nuanced perceptions of the world around them" (Learning for Justice, n.d., para. 3).

In addition to exposing students to a multitude of perspectives and shaking up dominant narratives, Layla was cognizant of celebrating the cultures of marginalized groups, rather than strictly looking at their stories through the lens of oppression. She referenced Gates et al.'s (2022) documentary, *Making Black America: Through the Grapevine*, to highlight the importance of celebrating the vibrant culture of the Black diaspora in the United States:

> Oftentimes oppressed marginalized groups are only seen in the sense of their trauma and their oppression. We need to learn about other cultures, and we need to learn about the

injustices that are going on, but that needs to go hand-in-hand with something more positive.

Objectives for Students

Layla worked closely with her school's English department team to plan the AP language course for all 11th graders at WACPS. Unlike other departments at the school, the English department does not assign students to different tracks, instead the department prepares all students for the AP language exam and college-level writing in different disciplines. Though reporting the scores to colleges has been optional, all students have been encouraged to take the AP language exam.

Layla has aimed for her students to develop as writers by writing effectively and persuasively about topics they care about and by telling their stories. Layla would like her students to read a variety of texts confidently and with understanding, not solely literary texts but images and commercials as well. She would also like her students to analyze rhetorical appeals by identifying persuasive strategies across different kinds of texts. For example, as part of her unit on race and ethnicity, Layla wanted her students to analyze and distill Coates's (2015) "metaphorical, elliptical, referential, intertextual style of writing to concrete precise arguments." Last, she had discussion-related goals for her students, which included gaining skills and more confidence as facilitators, speakers, and listeners while engaged in discourse.

Layla mentioned goals relating specifically to social justice teaching were grounded in the organization of her curriculum's units. The first unit, based on childhood and education, began with the exploration of the self. The subsequent units examined race and ethnicity followed by gender and sexuality. The final unit, which her team decided to change, focused on

religion and spirituality. This unit involved asking students to write about themselves and where they were situated in the world using the different perspectives examined throughout all the units. They were asked to reflect on how they were educated, what their childhood was like, and where they do or do not fit concerning conversations about race, ethnicity, language, gender, and sexuality.

To better understand the learning needs of her students, Layla has asked them to fill out a Google document at the beginning of the year with questions including: how do you learn best, what helps you learn, and what is difficult for you? She has valued responding to each student with feedback, especially if they express anxiety about who they are as learners. At WACPS, students with specific learning needs can receive accommodations, and there are counselors and a learning specialist to assist students with the process. Layla relayed, generally, students with learning needs are not admitted if the school cannot meet their needs; however, sometimes learning needs surface once students are matriculated because parents might not have disclosed students' needs during the admissions process. Even though Layla was forthcoming about it being easier for her to have less students with diverse learning needs, she does not think it is equitable.

Curriculum and Text Selection

As discussed, Layla and her team have two curriculum-related priorities: skills needed for the AP language exam and exposure to a multiplicity of voices. Layla explained she and her team have worked diligently to ensure they have an inclusive curriculum. For their race and ethnicity unit, they looked at approximately 25 shorter texts to accompany Coates's (2015) *Between the World and Me* and landed on seven of them. When she inherited the 11th grade

curriculum, she added additional voices to the race and ethnicity unit to make it more inclusive and to move beyond American and Anglo-American perspectives:

> When I came into this classroom, [when] other people were teaching [the race and ethnicity unit] it was only like Black people [authors], really, and some White writing. So, I was like we live in [Southern California], why don't we have a Latino voice. . . . We have a lot of students from Iran, let's have [more representation] so it's really thinking about where we live, in what part of the world we live in. There was a really beautiful essay about how Mexicans view race and how other Latin-American countries view [race], I feel like it [the unit] is American-centered. And just because me and my background, I always try to push against that [the American perspective] a little and say, you know there are other parts of the world, and things are not equal and not the same, and kids often become very curious about that.

When Layla was asked how her curriculum might be rooted in social justice, she responded by bringing up windows and mirrors, an idea that books can serve as portals into other worlds or as reflections of readers' own lived experiences:

> Certainly, the idea of mirrors and windows is key, both in lang [AP language] and lit [AP literature]. It's not enough just to see your own experience mirrored . . . but that you also need to find out about other types of experiences. I think that's probably the easiest way to put it. That really informs the selection of our texts and the topics.

Pedagogy

Layla described justice-oriented practices rooted in mindfulness, curiosity, and listening that have informed her approach to teaching and relationship building:

> To me that [mindfulness] really connects to social justice, because I also try to approach each student in the spirit of nonjudgment and genuine curiosity about their experience, like when I meet with students one-on-one I like to ask them questions and find out things before I proceed and I'm just genuinely interested in their lives and really care deeply about them as people, and not just as learners in my classroom. Let's say, even when someone is struggling with a particular skill, I like to always start the meeting with "tell me about your process. Tell me what's going on." Let's listen first.

When Layla was further asked to explore how she might create a caring and inclusive classroom environment that supports students' intersecting identities, she returned to the integration of mindfulness. When students come into the classroom each day, she begins the class with "Mindful Minutes," space for students to pause before starting their work, center themselves, and practice breath work. As seen during her classroom observations, students valued the time they had to stop and reflect for a few minutes before beginning their classwork. Layla relayed she has used mindfulness as a practice to help students process events such as the day after President Trump was elected in 2016. Layla also explained how Harkness discussions (Phillips Exeter Academy, n.d.) and space for reflection encourage every voice at the table. She noted students engaged in reflective writing after discussions in which they receive individualized feedback. Layla has incorporated reflection at the end of each unit, gleaning valuable information from her students. She has sought to discover what resonated with students and what was difficult for them during each unit. She has used this information to inform her planning and teaching for future units.

Harkness Discussions and Class Norming

Layla and the WACPS English department have used the Harkness method (Phillips Exeter Academy, n.d.) as a student-centered discussion model. This methodology is only used by the English department at WACPS. She was trained in the Harkness method at an institute on the East Coast and felt it has been transformative in her classroom. She reiterated the importance of listening as integral to the nature of Harkness discussions:

> The Harkness pedagogy [Phillips Exeter Academy, n.d.], too, is very much connected to that [listening]. It's sort of like I'll give you these things to look for and think about, but then I really want to listen and hear what you have to say as opposed to, "I'm going to tell you what this means, I'm going to tell [you] why it's important." So just really listening.

As observed in Layla's classroom, she and her students engaged in a Harkness discussion on Coates's (2015) use of rhetoric in *Between the World and Me.* During the student-driven discussion, her students explored topics from journal prompts, posed questions, and actively listened to one another. Additionally, students' books were open, and they used evidence from their annotations to support their comments.

In previous years, Layla has employed class norming for Harkness discussion guidelines (Phillips Exeter Academy, n.d.). She and her students have also created specific class norms for units she has considered to be more controversial. Although students came up with their discussion norms, she has given them several lists of examples from university websites. This way, they can select norms that resonate with them and that they want to prioritize as a class community. Each of her classes have come up with different sets of norms. She also has given

suggestions to her students for norms she would like them to consider, if they have not been mentioned by students:

> One of the norms that I took has very explicit language about [how] we don't want to demean anyone because of their experiences or lack of experiences, and it [the suggestions] also has an explicit norm about making sure that students are not called on to speak for or on behalf of their perceived identity.

As stated in Layla's class syllabus, students are regularly assessed on their participation during full-class Harkness discussions (Phillips Exeter Academy, n.d.). She has assessed her students' discussion skills by using a rubric that recognizes the multiple ways of participating in a discussion. She explained some of her students have needed to work on listening, whereas other students must work on building up their courage just to say something. She has also worked with her students on their meta-awareness of discussions. At the end of each unit, students self-assessed their discussion skills based on Layla's notes and reflected on their strengths and areas for potential growth. As part of their self-assessment, students created a goal for each unit while marking up their rubrics. Layla has noticed her and her students' rubrics are typically in close alignment.

Social Action and Activism

When Layla was asked about her students having opportunities to engage in social action projects stemming from their reading, she responded by saying "no" and stated the absence of such projects was "something [they] could work on." She has thought about adding social action projects and expressed it would be "cool" to incorporate them into her curriculum. Although Layla had reservations about labeling herself as a teacher for social justice, she considered

herself to be an activist. She believed activism and teaching intersect when teachers are open with their students. She indicated that when she felt strongly about something, she speaks up about it with her students. Layla referenced when she felt compelled to speak to her students about the protests in Ferguson, Missouri, which resulted from the shooting of Michael Brown:

> You have to be careful because I think the way they [teaching and activism] intersect when you're open and transparent with your students about things that matter to you, when things happen out in the world that you find problematic or something we should do something about, I will talk about that with my students, and I was one of the few people at my school that talked [to the students] when the Ferguson protests were happening, nobody at my school, at that time there was no administrative acknowledgement of what was going on, very few teachers spoke out about it, and I spoke out about it. I said this is going on, I remember I was actually at the NCTE in DC when the verdict came out and I remember I was in the hotel checking out. . . . Everyone who worked in that hotel was Black, and I just remember people were . . . and then I got on the plane and I was sobbing, and, they're all these White people around me scrolling Facebook, but it's like nothing had happened. And I came to school, and it was like nothing had [happened], and I was like this is not okay, I'm going to say something. And afterwards, I had a couple of kids come up to me and say thank you for doing that, showing us that [you care]. . . . [I thought] I want to teach this class, but I need to talk to you guys about something first because this is happening and it's really horrible and it's not okay.

Layla continued to speak about the importance of being responsive and speaking openly with students about what's happening in the world. She also described how she responded to the January 6, 2021 insurrection while teaching online:

> When the insurrection was happening, I was in class with my students on Zoom, and I [asked] what do you guys want to do, maybe you don't want to talk about [what happened] because everyone was so traumatized by then by all kinds of things, so I [said] "you decide, should we stop and talk?" We were actually reading Coates [2015] at the time, and I said, "do you want to keep reading this, talking about this book, or do you want to talk about what's happening right now? Or do you want to get off Zoom, and just be by yourself?" and I had three sections of lang [AP language] at the time, and I think that particular class that I was in, they [said] "we want to talk about what's going on, and we want to connect it to the book."

Layla strongly believed that when she finds things are problematic, it is critical to speak to her students; however, she acknowledged she must pick her battles. She shared that her commitment to being an upstander was influenced by her family's resistance to the Nazis during the Second World War:

> I share with them my past and my family's past. . . . I said, "My 100% pure Catholic grandfather was in a concentration camp because he fought against Nazis and stood up for, he could have been fine in that regime, but he wasn't going to sit idly by and watch Serbs and Jews being killed and this horrible thing happening." So, I shared that family past with them, and this is my family, this is my heritage, you don't sit back.

As Layla spoke about her family's resistance, she reflected on the 2016 election and questioned if she did enough:

> I'll be honest. I felt very guilty, because when Trump won, and all these things were happening, and it's like [I thought] am I my doing enough? I don't feel like I was doing enough. It was like [when], my grandma was in her 20s, she was hiding bombs under the floorboards in her apartment and she had to hide for a whole year in a village because she was in the resistance and she was a Serb and had they caught her, they would have killed her. They [her grandparents] put their lives on the line, what am I doing? I'm sending money to Democrats and writing postcards, so I don't know, I feel like I am an activist because I try to make the world a better place but [not] compared to my grandparents.

Layla was unsure if she saw her teaching as activism. She would like to see her teaching this way but explained she is hard on herself. However, she felt that when her students leave her classroom, they are more conscious than they were when they started the school year. She felt she leaves a mark on her students yet was uncertain if that was indeed activism.

Student Outcomes

After spending a year in her classroom, Layla would like her students to come away with a multifaceted understanding of texts and the surrounding world. She emphasized the importance of students understanding multiple viewpoints on a variety of topics. She would also like her students to be aware of and appreciate great literature written in different parts of the world. She explained they should seek it out rather than simply explore the "books that are right in front of them." Additionally, she would like her students to understand the power of their own voices,

how to listen to others, and how to cultivate intellectual curiosity, which she tried to model for them.

Opportunities for Critical Self-Reflection

When I asked Layla about opportunities for critical self-reflection, she relayed there have not been many at WACPS. At the beginning of each school year, teachers create goals for themselves and meet with their department chairs as part of a “folio” process. Layla stated the process has felt corporate despite being designed by teachers, for teachers. The process has not involved substantive self-reflection; however, the school administration mandated at least one goal should be tied to diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB). Although she has found her school’s leadership to have many strengths, she has not felt that they encourage reflection. Her meetings with the English department have involved reflection on best practices and student learning, yet there have been few discussions beyond choosing texts related to identity and bias work, which are practices associated with critical self-reflection.

Although she has not engaged in collective critical reflection with her team, Layla indicated the English department has transformed since she started teaching at WACPS. When she was hired, the English department was mainly teaching traditional Western canonical texts (i.e., “dead White dudes”). Layla initially found some of the department chairs’ perspectives on pedagogy to be problematic; however, over the years, the school’s leadership has been intentional about selecting department chairs who were more equity oriented and conscious. Layla felt the English department has made positive changes by no longer placing students in educational tracks and by generating a department-created document with guidelines for text selection. She felt teachers in the English department have been generally supportive of one

another and of work related to social justice; however, she had to advocate for a more open-ended project on identity to be incorporated into the 11th grade AP language course.

School Leadership

Layla described the school's administration as being supportive of changes made by the department. She felt the leadership has been generally hands off about decisions relating to teaching. She has not received pushback from her leadership or students about her teaching; however, her colleague received some resistance in 2021 from several White male students who felt that, by reading Coates (2015), they were supporting a "woke agenda." The students disagreed with Coates's views on law enforcement, particularly references made about police dying during 9/11. Layla also noted that her administration has protected the teachers from parent complaints about the curriculum.

Professional Development and Opportunities for Collaboration

Layla reported WACPS has a very generous professional development budget. The faculty also has a center for teaching and learning, of which Layla is a part, where research librarians are available to assist teachers with resources. Currently, teachers do not have opportunities to observe one another as part of professional development. In the past, teachers were encouraged to observe teachers in other independent schools. It has not been customary for the school's leadership to observe teachers with regularity. As such, teachers are not professionally developed through routine observations and subsequent feedback.

Teachers no longer meet for whole school faculty meetings as they were stopped due to teacher burnout during the COVID-19 global pandemic. The school has also organized fewer in-service days to prevent burnout in response to many teachers leaving the profession and leaving

the area. As a result, Layla believed that teachers felt isolated. However, there have been ongoing professional development workshops. Layla had the opportunity to run a professional development workshop with her psychology colleague on trauma-informed teaching in response to the pandemic. They aimed to help teachers process their trauma and give them tools to help support students experiencing trauma. Although she had this opportunity, there have not often been opportunities to collaborate on issues concerning social justice. Layla would like to engage in more collective work centered on social justice goals. However, she has worked with faculty on writing and rhetoric projects and has been facilitating more interdisciplinary and cross-department work.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging Work

There has been an increase of work centered on DEIB at WACPS, particularly in response to the racial justice movement and protests during the summer of 2020. At that time, teachers participated in a workshop, *Teaching While White,* meant to create space for critical reflection, which Layla did not find to be very worthwhile. She found the workshop difficult because of colleagues varying levels of knowledge about issues of equity. She was frustrated about having to explain concepts to her colleagues so familiar to her, especially about students feeling isolated in the community:

> What often happens when we're doing this work together as a community is you end up, and I'm very frustrated with this partly because it feels like you are the one doing the "teaching" in this professional workshop but do not get a chance to do some more higher level thinking or reflecting on your own practice because you are doing the facilitators work . . . [you end up] in a small group explaining the most basic of concepts to faculty

who never even, I mean it was like, duh like, what did you, what of course you know she [a student] was isolated, and she wasn't feeling great that she had to speak up for a whole group of people, how this is not a very basic thing?

In addition to the workshop, WACPS hired a DEIB director, who was also the assistant head of school, to replace the athletics director who had been serving as the former DEIB director. There were DEIB representatives in each division, though they were not teachers of academic disciplines, nor have they had formal academic training in a DEIB-related discipline. She remembered 1 year prior to the pandemic, the athletics department ran a DEIB program for upper school students that, according to students, went "horribly wrong." Students asked Layla why the school had not just let the English department run DEIB events. She explained, "and then a couple of kids said to me, 'I don't understand why they don't just let the English department do these things, you guys know what you are doing.'" Last, Layla mentioned another part of the DEIB programming included the school's affinity groups for students.

Tensions of Teaching in a Privileged School

Layla acknowledged it could be difficult to navigate having students from vastly different socioeconomic backgrounds. Class discussions have been challenging when she has known for certain there were students who might have been receiving financial assistance sitting in the class and listening to assumptions being made by more financially privileged students. She recognized many of her students who were not from racially or economically privileged backgrounds "are very aware that they're not." When she and her students have read texts that bring up issues of inequity and injustice, these students were "like of course this is my lived experience every day of my life," whereas for the privileged students, "they are like, oh, this has never occurred to me

before." She has wrestled with how she should intervene and respond to her socioeconomically advantaged students' assumptions:

> First of all, I don't know which of my students are on tuition assistance, and which aren't, and I don't try to assume, but in general I guess it's safe to assume that about 70% based on our statistics. About 70% of the students are from economically really privileged families. I feel like the kids, especially the last few years, are way more conscious of that, and aware of that, and they bring it up . . . it was brought up by a kid just last week, and I did not intervene. And then, after it was like, should I have intervened because he said he made this assumption, he said, "well all of us are, you know really privileged because you know we can all afford tuition here," and I didn't step in. Normally I think I would have said something like "well that might not be the case, let's not make those [assumptions]" or something like that. I don't know why I didn't step in; I think I was just tired or something.

Layla also brought up interactions pertaining to privilege that have happened on a more one-to-one level with her students when there was a disconnect between the obstacles some of her privileged students have faced to those experienced by authors or characters they have examined in class. Her socioeconomically, racially, and otherwise advantaged students were not attuned to how their challenges might differ from the experiences of those without privilege:

> [In the] Unit 1 essay, we have them write about their own experience and connect [it to] one of the authors, and every year I get this where kids are like, "well I want to compare my experience of overcoming obstacles playing baseball with how Sherman Alexie and Malcolm X have challenges, but they persevere." So, I'm very explicit about that. I'm

> like, "Well wait a minute let's think about what is similar and what is different." Then they're like, "Oh, okay I see what you're saying." [I say], "Yes you persevered then you overcame [it], but your life was not on the line like it was for these two people. What would have happened? What's the worst thing that could have happened if you didn't do well with baseball?" It's like, "Well I probably [could] go for another sport." "Okay, what's the worst thing that would have happened to Malcolm X if he hadn't educated himself in prison? Or Sherman Alexie, if he had just not read as much or gone against the grain of his teacher's assumptions about Native Americans?" [The students might say], "oh, okay, I see."

Meena

Meena did not have explicit preparation in social justice teaching though she recollected learning about diversity awareness and cultural sensitivity as part of her training and schooling. After she taught English for several years in a public high school, she looked for a job in another part of Southern California and was initially drawn to High Point (HP) because of its emphasis on the arts. She did not intentionally seek out a position at an independent school nor did she look for a justice-oriented school, yet she found something magical about HP, "a spark," compared to the public school she had taught at previously. Meena felt HP was a private school with a public heart; there were the advantages of an independent school such as a small community with small class sizes, the freedom to craft one's curriculum, and teachers who can live the mission, engage in activist work, and get to know their students. However, she described HP as having "the diversity of a public school." Meena felt HP was not like a typical independent school:

> It just doesn't feel . . . like those stereotypes I have of what a private school might feel like, where there's actually kind of a lack of diversity, and possibly a kind of educational elitism if I'm being honest, I mean those kinds of things, I don't really feel at High Point.

When Meena applied for a position at HP, the leadership took a personal interest in her story. They asked her questions such as, "where have you been," "what's your educational philosophy," and "tell us about your art, tell us about the work you do." She felt HP showed a true interest and curiosity in her and the students they interview. She noted she transitioned quite easily from a public school environment to HP.

Conceptualization of Teaching for Social Justice

Meena identified as a teacher for social justice. She conceptualized teachers who teach for social justice as being central to who they are. She described teachers for social justice as bringing a certain awareness to the classroom because they are involved in the broader community. She indicated the work teachers for social justice do in the classroom is an extension of their own activism. Meena continued to define social justice teaching as the challenging of students' points of view, particularly related to issues of race, gender, culture, and class. She considered social justice teaching to be connected to an awareness of the world and a diversity of belief systems.

More specifically, Meena conceptualized teaching for social justice in the secondary ELA classroom as prompting students to see reading and writing as political, as a means of empowerment. Meena viewed teaching with a social justice approach as a pathway to wake students up to particular issues through literature. Meena described other principles of social justice teaching in the secondary ELA classroom such as intentional book selection, picking

themes for courses that are relevant and relatable to the students (loss, identity, and resilience is the theme for ninth-grade English), building personal relationships with the students, supporting the wellness of the whole child, cultivating cultural literacy, and creating a syllabus rooted in equity and social justice.

An ongoing challenge for Meena has been creating balance between traditional, canonical texts and more contemporary texts that represent historically marginalized voices. When devising her curriculum, she liked to include a mix of classics, contemporary books, a nonfiction text, and a memoir. As evidenced in Meena's class syllabus, her book selection incorporated a blend of texts such as Bradbury's (2013) *Fahrenheit 451*, Salinger's (2010) *Catcher in the Rye,* and Shelley's *Frankenstein* (Shelley & Hunter, 2022), with more contemporary texts like C. Smith's (2016) *Counting Descent,* Satrapi's (2003) *Persepolis,* and Lovelace's (2020) *Break Your Glass Slippers*. Students were also invited to select one outside novel of their choice, thereby promoting student agency. At the end of each school year, she asked her students to give feedback on her book choices, which helped elucidate her choices for the following school year.

Goals for the Year

As part of the course description in Meena's class syllabus, she outlined goals for the year rooted in the creation of a "safe and inspired environment." She stated in her syllabus that students will discover their authentic voice in writing, learn to approach writing as a process, sharpen their reasoning skills, participate confidently in discourse, develop an appreciation for reading literature, expand their vocabulary knowledge, learn the elements of literary analysis, and focus on all aspects of mechanical writing: grammar, punctuation, and sentence structure. More specifically, she would like students to gain experience with narrative, persuasive, and

analytical writing so they are prepared for the kind of writing they will encounter in 10th grade. The exploration of the aforementioned theme (i.e., loss, identity, and resilience) through the texts students read is another objective for the school year.

At the end of the school year, Meena shared she would like her students to have a positive feeling about her class. She would like her students to have the capacity to think critically; to have built meaningful reading, writing, and discussion skills stemming from the content they covered as a community; to have more self-awareness; and to have evolved individually. Meena also has individualized goals for different students:

> My sense is that students remember more how they felt in your class, and I hope they feel supported, and I hope that they got a chance to grow in the way they individually wanted to grow because it's sort of like first semester assessing where are you at, where do you need to grow, where do you want to grow?

Inclusive Curriculum

Meena has prioritized an inclusive curriculum but recognized she has had blind spots pertaining to it. She mentioned the challenges of ensuring an evolving, inclusive curriculum and the importance of balancing text selection with the investigation of texts through critical lenses:

> Just when you think you're being inclusive, you're like, oh wait hold up, I didn't do this right. I'm missing this. So it's just intentionally looking at the [text] list and saying, okay, I am bringing in this variety, but also trusting that if it's not apparent that you can look at it [a text] through different lenses, you can bring them through the critical discussion . . . being inclusive with the list is definitely something I personally value, I think it's so

important to do that, but I think it's really impossible to do well. . . . I feel like that's a really challenging thing to do.

Meena relayed she recognized a blind spot in her curriculum when she presented her text offerings to her English 1 class. One of her students pointed out many of the stories were from a heteronormative perspective and she should incorporate more gender diversity. She acknowledged this was true and expressed her desire to expand her own reading. She explained when she has incorporated new books into her curriculum, she likes to spend 1 or 2 years preparing a book prior to teaching it.

Meena has enacted teaching for social justice in the secondary ELA classroom beginning with her curriculum, particularly her book selection. She intentionally has chosen books which deal with social justice issues. For example, she previously taught *I am Malala* (Yousafzai & Lamb, 2013) to address gender, education, and equity. Meena emphasized the importance of pulling out justice-oriented themes from books. She also has used critical lens work with her students to probe beyond the surface of stories and invite perspective taking. Meena referenced her ninth grade Disney unit, in which students deconstructed stereotyping in visual media, fairy tales, and Disney films. Meena noted that literary criticism is taught more deliberately in the 11th and 12th grades.

Class Discussions

Meena discussed how social justice issues were routinely part of class dialogue and layered into her class discussions. She felt a significant part of teaching for social justice is having a discussion-based classroom that honors student voices and where students learn as a community. Discussion norms, focused on respect, have been part of community building,

especially when there is disagreement among students. Meena articulated her approach to navigating student disagreement has changed. Rather than pull students aside after making contentious comments, she encouraged further discussion in response to them. She brought up an example of how she has changed her approach in reference to the first lesson observed as part of this study:

> The lesson that I did, I did the same lesson in a different class. And then, when I showed that [a Pepsi] commercial that we watched, I heard some students making racial comments to each other, like those kinds of comments, and it's setting the norms for that kind of language in the classroom, which is still something I'm kind of working on. I don't know if that's the most just way necessarily to deal with that, my views have changed. I think, when I first started, I was like, okay no you can't absolutely say anything offensive. But now and then I would pull the students aside and deal with them and feel like that was a form of justice or a practice of justice, whereas now, let's just talk about it now, let's not pull anyone aside. Let's just have a conversation about it. Let's stay gentle with it. What's happening here? Let's name it, but then move on rather than moving the student aside, singling out the student, and feeling like you need to talk to them.

When Meena spoke about students' participation in discussions, she emphasized the importance of listening, not just speaking. Meena has prompted her students to participate in discussions by saying "we haven't heard from this part of the room." She felt it has been important for her to respect different ways students show up in discussions, especially as someone who has identified as an introvert. She has tried to put intentional scaffolding in place

before engaging in conversations around race. She lets students know in advance when they will be discussing a story that might address topics like race, class, or gender. For example, when her students read Chopin's (2022) "Desiree's Baby," she frontloaded the discussion by talking about judgment and race. Meena indicated she would like to spend more time on self-reflection and deepening how she scaffolds discussions.

Building Relationships

Meena has created a classroom that affirms and sustains intersecting identities by building personal connections with students starting at the beginning of the school year. She has built relationships and developed a supportive environment "piece by piece, consistently" and by being mindful about giving students feedback as quickly as possible. She stated, "I feel like you're developing a supportive environment through that, you're saying I'm hearing you; I'm seeing you. I think it is making students feel visible." Meena has fostered rapport by being mindful about checking in with students at the beginning of each class to see how they are doing. The practice of going around the classroom at the beginning of class and checking in with all her students has helped her build community. As seen during two classroom observations, Meena engaged students individually in casual conversations at the beginning of class. She remarked that she asked students questions like, "what did you have for breakfast," "how far are you with the reading," and "where are you in your essay?"

Affirming Intersecting Identities

Other ways Meena has affirmed her students' intersecting identities is by having students fill out surveys at the beginning of the school year so she can learn about what shapes their identities. She also has learned about aspects of their identities through their writing. After

reading *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* (Chobsky, 1999) as their summer book, her students began English 1 by writing "The Perks of Being a Blank" and creating a biographical poem. She has modeled how to speak about identity and has shared her personal experiences about her own cultural and religious identity as a Pakistani American. She explained she has felt comfortable engaging in personal identity work with her students because of her own intersecting identities.

Critical Dispositions

When Meena was asked about how her students might develop critical dispositions, she referenced her Disney unit which focused on students investigating something that was part of everyday culture. She also discussed the importance of reading through critical lenses. Initially, she questioned the meaning of a critical disposition:

> I know that we're practicing those skills, but it's a different thing to develop a critical disposition. Right? I mean what is a critical disposition? It's like not trusting everything you read or being skeptical. What is a critical disposition? It's like being able to evaluate sources, that's one thing that comes to mind, like we were talking about ethos the other day and the credibility of the source or the credibility of something. So, I'm wondering, is that having a critical disposition?

After further discussion of critical dispositions and providing my interpretation of the term, Meena expressed it has been more of a struggle to get students to process and listen to what the literature might be saying before they critique it. She has found the emphasis on critical thinking and the encouragement to question things can inhibit her students from initially pausing to understand what they are reading prior to critiquing it.

Social Action and Activism

Meena has not incorporated explicit literature-based social action projects into her curriculum but has viewed writing as a tool for activism. She articulated how opportunities for students to engage in debates, mock trials, or events like her Beat poetry café have been ways for students to take on an activist approach and potentially address frustration and helplessness related to social justice issues. As observed during her ninth-grade lessons, students prepared for and participated in a debate in which they formulated sides of an issue-related argument in teams and were required to use the concepts of ethos, pathos, and logos as appeals. It was evident that students were developing perspective taking skills as part of this process.

Meena pointed out that activism was part of HP's ethos and spirit, and, because the school's infrastructure encouraged activism and discussion about activism through the school's advisory program, the creation of clubs, and weekly town hall meetings, she has not felt pressure to prioritize activism in her curriculum. Moreover, she did not consider activism to be a central part of her identity, but she suggested if art is activism, then her creative writing and poetry could be interpreted as activism. Additionally, Meena believed her teaching was a form of activism and that teaching and activism intersect through the encouragement of critical thinking. Meena felt it was important to teach her students to be independent thinkers and to have them speak their truth while providing convincing evidence and commentary. She noted when students embrace their own values and individuality and understand that writing can be a tool, "it is political." She felt empowering students with the skills they need to seek out their truth is political. She also remarked how she reminds them that everything is subjective, "Everything's

an argument, everything you read, [for example] you're reading the directions to this assignment, that's an argument right there. . . . It's perspective taking too."

Critical Reflection

When Meena was initially asked if she engaged in critical self-reflection as part of her teaching at HP, she reported she used a journal to reflect on her teaching practices prior to the COVID-19 global pandemic. Her reflections focused on what worked and didn't work for her curricular units along with inspirations and ideas for future teaching rather than explicit critical self-reflection. In addition, before the pandemic, HP teachers were observed and evaluated by the school's leadership. Teachers also were paired with another teacher as peer-learning partners. Each teacher would observe their partner–teacher three times and then meet to discuss what was observed after their classroom visits. Meena indicated teachers have also had other opportunities to collaborate with one another and to critically reflect on their teaching as part of professional development.

Professional Development

HP's professional development has been focused on DEI, teaching and learning, and well-being. Meena has found the DEI and social justice work have been especially valuable. She relayed this work has made teachers aware of how they can support a diverse group of learners in their classroom and how they can enhance their own cultural literacy. Meena recently participated in a workshop using case studies centered on cultural misunderstandings in the classroom. The programming around issues of social justice has been driven by the school's leadership and has involved teachers as collaborators. Meena has helped with DEI-related professional development.

School Culture

Meena reported that social justice is interwoven into many aspects of the culture of HP:

> Social justice is so front and center, in just the fiber of the school, all the workshops they'll organize I feel have some element of that. We do it [social justice work] in advisory which students are in now twice a week, and we're talking about those kinds of issues. And every week at Town Hall we're talking about that [social justice issues] in some way.

As discussed, because social justice was such an integral part of the school culture, Meena did not feel the same urgency to teach about social justice issues as she did when teaching in a public school context. When she was a public school teacher, she felt compelled to teach about social justice issues because they were not prioritized and part of the vernacular of the school. She has not felt the same necessity to encourage activism at HP:

> [When] I was at public school, I felt more pressured to make sure I was including critical thinking, to really get into some social justice issues with the literature, and it's not like we don't do that here, but I feel less pressured to do that because it's so part of the culture of the school, so it's supported, but also, like not demotivated me, I don't know what the word is, but taking the pressure off in a way because I don't feel it is something foreign to the vocabulary of the school the way I was feeling at the public school.

Teaching in a Privileged School Context

At first, when Meena discussed navigating the tensions of teaching in a privileged school context, particularly one that has been committed to providing financial aid to 30–40% of its students, she responded by discussing the importance of "naming it" with students and

unpacking the social implications of being part of a socioeconomically diverse space. Meena initially seemed unsure about the tensions resulting from teaching in a privileged context. As she was invited to reflect further, she spoke of tensions she had noticed in students' passing comments or in their written work. She also referenced tensions revealed by some of the women of color affinity group members, whom she advises:

> [In the] Women of Color Club, I'm a fly on the wall and I sit in the back and it's this diverse group of women who are talking about their experiences at the school. And suddenly, all these tensions came out. You know all these real, true feelings that I would never hear expressed in that same way in the classroom. But it was, by aligning with a community where you create a safe space, and you're able to voice those kinds of challenges of being in a privileged school. I was actually really shocked because I haven't heard anything like this in my own classes this forthright, it's not like it never happens, but it just doesn't happen often.

I probed further by asking Meena, "Did it pertain to their experience as someone of color? Or was it addressing class, or kind of the whole intersectionality of it?" She responded by explaining:

> [The] intersectionality of it, gender and class and race and privilege. All of that was kind of being discussed, and to be frank, if you're in a faculty meeting, and everyone's making comments, and they might be really supportive of some kind of new mission, and then afterwards, they're like, "what the heck, why are we doing this," it felt like that kind of real talk.

It was evident that the women of color affinity group provided a space where members could be open about their experiences at the school. Meena was somewhat surprised to hear about the tensions related to gender, race, class, and privilege because they had rarely surfaced during her class discussions. Meena has found choosing pieces of literature that can serve as the basis for discussion about class to be helpful; however, Meena acknowledged that it can be challenging and tricky to broach class tensions in her classroom. In her 12th grade world religions class, she questioned if her students faced discomfort confronting issues of class privilege or if they had yet developed the critical faculty to be able to discuss them:

> In my world religions class, we just finished Hinduism a couple of weeks ago, and we were talking about the caste system, and, oh my gosh, the caste system. [I said], “we have kind of a caste here, let’s talk about,” but I saw that was a really challenging conversation to spark. It felt like it was easier to talk about [that] there’s a caste there [abroad].

Meena pointed out students in her classes were more willing to have “messier” conversations several years ago. Together, Meena and I speculated students might be reluctant to say things or might be grappling with how to speak in class because of cancel culture and sensitivity training and awareness.

Spirituality and Social Justice

Toward the close of our discussion on tensions relating to teaching in a privileged context, Meena shared she had a strong spiritual sensibility. Though she stated she was not religious and pointed out she did not try to convert her students in any way, her spiritual values such as kindness, compassion, and a connection to the heart center informed her teaching for social justice. She felt that everyone is oppressed by something:

> Whether someone is privileged in one way or not, they're oppressed in some other way, everyone is oppressed by something, or by a lot of things. So just recognizing that, I think in my mind I go with that, and so another goal I have through teaching literature is just teaching those kinds of spiritual values, just kindness, just compassion, just those kinds of things, and it's like soft social justice, maybe, those things really matter to me, staying connected to your heart, staying connected to your heart center.

Cross-Case Analysis

To fully respond to Research Question 1, it is important to discuss how participants' approaches to social justice teaching were shaped by their identities. As a White male, Adam voiced he has historically been able to see himself in the literature, his teachers, and the writers they examined from the traditional canon. Thus, he felt a responsibility as someone from an overrepresented group to critically examine and question literature with his students with equity and justice in mind. Layla's experience with antisemitism influenced her approach to teaching, particularly her prioritizing the exploration of stories about being marginalized or othered. Meena shared that her experience as a Pakistani American has shaped her capacity to model identity work and engage in the process with her students.

During my first interviews with participants, teachers were initially asked if they considered themselves to be teachers for social justice. Adam preferred not to label himself as one because he viewed labels as performative rather than action based; however, he considered himself to be a "socially conscious teacher." Layla did not identify as a teacher for social justice. She said she would have labeled herself a social justice teacher in the past, but, because of the polarized climate, she was reluctant to do so during the interviews. However, she saw her

teaching as a form of activism. Meena considered herself to be a teacher for social justice. Although she did not consider activism to be a primary aspect of her identity, she saw her writing as a means of activism. She also conceptualized part of social justice teaching as an extension of a teacher's own activism. In reference to NCTE's (2021) current standards, all three teachers did not explicitly identify as antiracist educators, yet they have tackled issues of race and equity with their students through literature and class discussions.

Teachers were also asked to define social justice teaching and provide their interpretation of teaching for social justice in the secondary ELA classroom as part of their first interviews. Though each teacher had their own nuanced conceptualization of social justice teaching and social justice teaching in the secondary ELA classroom, there were common threads between them. Overall, participants placed value on addressing social justice issues with their students and having them develop an awareness of the world. Participants also referenced action or activism as being central to their approach. Adam defined social justice educators as teachers who address social justice issues. He reported social justice teaching in the secondary ELA classroom should be centered on educators' actions to examine and reflect with their students about what is happening in the world. Layla articulated social justice teaching is an approach to informing students about various social justice issues as well. She connected social justice teaching to activism and change and pondered if her teaching resulted in this. Layla considered social justice teaching in the secondary ELA classroom to be centered on exposing students to voices, viewpoints, and cultures that are different from the dominant narrative and giving students tools and methodologies to examine and discuss them. She underscored this process is intended to open students' eyes to multiple perspectives.

Meena conceptualized teachers who teach for social justice as being “core to who they are.” She described teaching for social justice as teachers bringing a certain awareness to the classroom because they are involved in the broader community. Meena considered the work teachers for social justice do in the classroom as an extension of their own activism. She also interpreted social justice teaching as the challenging of students’ point of views, particularly related to issues of race, gender, class, and culture. Like Adam and Layla, Meena viewed teaching literature through the lens of social justice as a vehicle for waking students up to particular social justice issues. She felt social justice teaching fosters an awareness of the world and a diversity of belief systems. More specifically, Meena conceptualized teaching for social justice in the secondary ELA classroom as an approach that prompts students to see reading and writing as political and as a means of empowerment. She also identified principles of social justice teaching in the secondary ELA classroom as part of her interpretation including intentional book selection, picking themes for courses that are relevant and relatable to the students, building personal relationships with the students, supporting the wellness of the whole child, cultivating cultural literacy, and creating a syllabus rooted in equity and social justice.

Cross-Case Themes

Numerous cross-case themes emerged from the findings in response to how three secondary ELA educators in independent secondary schools conceptualized and enacted social justice teaching. Analysis of demographic questionnaires, interviews, observations, and class syllabi revealed themes related to aspects of Dover’s (2013, 2016) three-pronged framework of curriculum, pedagogy, and social action. A primary curricular element discussed across all three cases centered on the implementation of an inclusive curriculum.

An Inclusive Curriculum

Teachers valued the development of curricula with a deliberate selection of texts reflecting a departure from dominant narratives. It was evident that teachers placed a great deal of importance on selecting texts representing a multiplicity of voices. Whereas Adam and Layla discussed texts that question dominant narratives, Layla and Meena emphasized the significance of examining texts through critical lenses. Meena pointed out the lens that students apply to a text is just as important as the identity of the author.

Identity Work

There were several cross-case themes connected to pedagogical practices including identity work, relationship building, literature-based discussion methodologies, perspective taking, and student well-being. Adam engaged in identity work with his 10th grade students by asking them to write about the major understandings of their consciousness and to create an art piece that represented aspects of their consciousness. Students then reflected on how their identities shaped their consciousness and shared their reflections with the class community. Layla included identity work in her curriculum by beginning her 11th grade AP language course with a unit on childhood and education: an exploration of the self. She also pushed her 11th grade English department team to incorporate an open-ended identity project into the curriculum. Meena's ninth grade theme for the year focused on loss, identity, and resilience. She also had assignments built into her curriculum that involved identity work such as her introductory writing assignment, in which students were asked to write "The Perks of Being a Blank" and to create a biographical poem in response to their summer reading. Meena also demonstrated a

commitment to identity work by speaking about her own cultural and religious identity as a Pakistani American.

Building Relationships

Building relationships was identified and discussed in all three cases as being an integral practice in teaching for social justice in the secondary ELA classroom. Participants highlighted creating a caring and supportive learning environment, one that affirms students' intersecting identities and fosters open discussions, particularly about race or other topics, as critical to establishing trust. Layla and Meena spoke about how building relationships has been imperative to promoting open discussions, whereas Adam spoke about discussions as being foundational to building relationships. Adam also believed relationships are developed through identity work, free writes, and reflection sharing. Layla articulated she has developed relationships by providing individualized feedback on her students' writing and meeting with students one on one both inside and outside of class. She also mentioned that relationship building involves deep care and genuine interest in students' lives, "not just as learners in her classroom, but as people." Meena has built personal connections with her students by consistently checking in with them during class and being cognizant about giving feedback to her students writing as quickly as possible. She emphasized the importance of making students feel visible.

Discussion-Based Classrooms

As evidenced from the data, participants were implementing pedagogical practices that went beyond the banking concept of education and were rooted in dialogic teaching (Freire, 2018). All participants shared they valued discussion-based classrooms. Adam and Layla have used the Harkness method (Phillips Exeter Academy, n.d.) to promote student-centered

discourse, in which the teacher serves as a facilitator or observer rather than a leader. Students learn about the importance of listening while also considering how they participate in a discussion. Students are expected to pose questions, actively listen, and respond to one another without monopolizing the conversation. They also are asked to reflect on discussions after they take place. Meena did not use the Harkness method (Phillips Exeter Academy, n.d.); however, her classes were centered around discussion. Though her ninth grade whole class discussion was more teacher led during one of my class observations, students played an active role in participation and proceeded to lead their small group discussions as they prepared for their class debate.

The Examination of Multiple Perspectives

All cases discussed the importance of fostering perspective taking as part of their pedagogical approach to social justice teaching. Adam described his 10th grade unit which focused on the examination of multiple perspectives. His students first explored Adichie's (2009) TED Talk: *The Danger of a Single Story* before reading Smith's (1994) *Twilight Los Angeles 1992.* By learning about the power of perspective taking, students furthered their understanding of the context of the Rodney King verdict and the LA riots. Layla and Meena reported they have fostered perspective taking by using critical lens work with their students. Layla has used literary criticism or critical lenses to analyze literature with her students from multiple viewpoints. Similarly, Meena has employed critical lens work with her students to "probe beyond the surface" of stories and elicit perspective taking. In Meena's ninth grade Disney unit, students deconstructed stereotyping in visual media, fairy tales, and Disney films. She indicated she has taught literary criticism more deliberately with her 11th and 12th grade students.

Mindfulness and Spirituality

Though Adam did not discuss mindfulness and/or spirituality, the practice of mindfulness and spirituality was discussed by both Layla and Meena. Layla integrated mindfulness into her classroom by starting each class period with “Mindful Minutes.” Layla relayed she has used mindfulness to create a caring, inclusive classroom environment and as a way for students to process what is happening around them. Meena considered the way she rooted her teaching in practices related to her spirituality to be a form of “soft social justice.” She discussed that values such as kindness, compassion, and a connection to the heart center inform her teaching for social justice. Further, Meena spoke about the importance of supporting the well-being of the whole child.

Social Action Projects

There were no explicit examples of social action projects seen across the three cases. As discussed in Chapter 2, researchers in the field have argued that the investigation of literature should result in social action (Boyd, 2017; Downey, 2005; Grant, 2012; Naiditch, 2010; North, 2008; Styslinger et al., 2019). When asked about social action projects, all three teachers had not incorporated them into their curricula. However, Adam relayed his assessments address issues of social justice. Layla stated that the absence of social action projects was something she wanted to work on; she would like to integrate them somehow into her curriculum. Meena considered her class debates, mock trials, or events like her Beat poetry café to be ways her students have taken on an activist approach. Meena also pointed out, because activism is part of her school’s ethos, she did not feel compelled to integrate social action projects into her curricula as students have opportunities to engage in social action beyond her classroom.

Independent School Contexts

Analysis further revealed themes across all three cases pertaining to teaching in an independent school context. Three themes emerged relating to teacher autonomy, critical self-reflection opportunities, and the prevalence of tensions associated with privilege and class. All cases reported having the liberty to devise their own curricula and make decisions pertaining to text selection and pedagogical practices with their English department teams.

Teacher Autonomy

Adam pointed out he has had the latitude to adjust his text selection in response to events like the George Floyd protests because his leadership had given him autonomy over his curriculum. He voiced his administration has been generally hands off. He has had the freedom to craft his curriculum and select texts that mirror the social justice issues he wants to explore with his students. Layla and Meena have also had the freedom to devise their own curricula. Layla felt her administration has been supportive of departmental changes and decisions involving teaching. All three teachers reported they were not regularly observed and evaluated by their school leadership; however, this might be because they have taught at their schools for a number of years or because independent schools are not required to conduct evaluations on a regular basis.

Critical Self-Reflection

Opportunities for critical self-reflection seen across the data could be considered an area of improvement. Adam discussed having the most opportunities for critical self-reflection at his school as part of professional development, the DEI office, and the Social Justice Institute. Layla reported there have not been many opportunities for her to engage in critical self-reflection at her

school. Teachers set goals for themselves at the beginning of the school year; however, the process has not involved substantive critical self-reflection. Her meetings with the English department have involved reflection on best practices and student learning, yet there have been few discussions relating to identity and bias work. Meena's school context has prioritized professional development related to DEI and cultural literacy, but it was unclear if that work involved many opportunities for critical self-reflection. She noted she had used a journal to critically reflect on her teaching prior to the pandemic, yet she did not mention if the reflection was based on identity work and biases, which are practices associated with critical self-reflection.

Tensions Teaching in a Privileged Space

All cases discussed the negotiation of tensions while teaching in a privileged space. Adam reported tensions related to navigating guilt and fragility, specifically White and socioeconomic fragility. Another tension he pointed out was related to the imbalance of Black students in the classroom, despite there being approximately 50% students of color at his school. Layla acknowledged it can be difficult to navigate discussions when assumptions are made by financially privileged students. She has grappled with how she should intervene and respond to their assumptions. She also noted many of her students who are not from privileged backgrounds "are very aware that they're not." Meena initially did not speak about navigating tensions associated with teaching in a privileged context, but, when further probed, she discussed the intersectional tensions based on class, race, and gender revealed by the women of color affinity group she monitors as an adviser. She also spoke of her students' reluctance to engage in conversations associated with class. In her 12th grade world religions class, she questioned if her

12th grade students were uncomfortable facing issues of class privilege or if they had not yet developed the critical capacity to discuss them.

Conclusion

The purpose of this qualitative multicase study was to investigate how three secondary ELA teachers in a variety of independent schools in Southern California conceptualized and enacted social justice teaching in their practice. This study also sought to illuminate how independent school contexts shape and impact teachers' practices. It aimed to examine how structural aspects such as governance, policies, and school mission, and factors such as school culture influenced teachers' understandings and implementation of justice-oriented practices.

Data analyses of confidential demographic questionnaires, confidential semistructured interviews with teachers, classroom observations, and teacher-created class syllabi were guided by a comparative framework resulting in thematic analysis. The findings revealed commonalities and differences among the three secondary ELA teachers. All participants indicated different aspects of their identities informed their approach to teaching. Although participants conceptualized and enacted social justice teaching in varying ways, data analyses revealed cross-case themes. Overall, teachers valued an inclusive curriculum, identity work, relationship building, discussion-based classrooms, the examination of multiple perspectives, and student well-being. Additionally, cross-case themes related to teachers' independent school contexts emerged associated with teacher autonomy, critical self-reflection, and the prevalence of tensions concerning privilege and class. I present further analysis and discussion of these findings in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Secondary English language arts (ELA) teachers in independent schools are well-situated to implement social justice teaching practices and to examine systemic inequities with their students because they do not often face the same constraints prevalent in many public schools. Additionally, the three teachers who participated in this multicase study in Southern California were not impacted by restrictive legislation rooted in the vilification of critical pedagogy or critical race theory in schooling. Although there has been an increase of empirical research examining social justice teaching in a variety of contexts, there was a gap in the research focused on social justice teaching in the secondary ELA classroom in independent schools. The purpose of this qualitative study was to address this gap in research and present and compare case studies of three secondary ELA teachers in a variety of independent secondary schools in Southern California to discover how they perceived and operationalized social justice teaching to foster critical engagement. Dover's (2013, 2016) three-dimensional framework of curriculum, pedagogy, and social action guided my examination of teachers' conceptualizations and enactment of social justice teaching. This study also sought to examine how independent school contexts shaped and impacted teachers' practices. It aimed to explore how structural aspects such as governance and mission, and factors such as school culture influenced teachers' understandings and implementation of their justice-oriented practices.

The cases described meaningful social justice teaching by three secondary ELA teachers in independent school contexts and provided rich description of practices that support the development of students' critical dispositions. Data from teacher demographic questionnaires,

teacher interviews, teacher observation notes, and teacher-created class syllabi were analyzed, coded, and triangulated resulting in the findings reported in Chapter 4. In this chapter, I revisit the following research questions and further discuss the findings of this study.

1. How do three secondary ELA educators in independent schools each conceptualize and enact social justice teaching?
2. How do three secondary ELA educators' beliefs and practices about social justice teaching intersect with their independent school contexts?

Next, I explore the significance of the findings and situate the study with the literature reviewed in Chapter 2. Last, I provide recommendations for practice and future research.

Discussion of Research Question 1 Findings

Much of the research on social justice teaching has sought to reify a framework to make it transferable to the classroom. Though it has been argued that devising a more concrete definition of social justice teaching could make it more applicable, Shah (2018) contended "one potential danger in the generalization of social justice is that the very 'difference' (i.e., social identities) that necessitates a social justice approach is rendered invisible in search of a 'toolkit'" (p. 3). In other words, social justice teaching is contextual (Boyd, 2017; Dover, 2013, 2016; Nieto & Bode, 2008). According to Radice (2022), "Every context—classroom, school, community—is unique and requires its own process" (para. 5). As evidenced in this study, the multidimensional ways teachers conceptualized and enacted social justice reflected each teacher's unique positionality and school context. It was apparent from the data the three independent schools that were part of this study supported teacher autonomy; therefore, teachers had the liberty to develop their own curricula. Teachers employed practices that spoke to their

hearts and pedagogy and that aligned with their school's leadership and culture. Across the cases, however, common threads emerged that were rooted in Dover's (2013, 2016) three-dimensional framework of curriculum, pedagogy, and social action.

Curriculum

Data revealed parallels across cases relating to the prioritization of crafting an inclusive, culturally responsive and sustaining curriculum, often noted as a critical aspect of the first dimension of Dover's (2013, 2016) framework for teaching for social justice in the secondary ELA classroom (Dover, 2016; Ladson-Billings, 1995; McLaughlin & DeVoogd, 2004). It was also evident from the findings that teachers were deliberate about their text selection and placed a great deal of importance on purposefully choosing texts that represented a multiplicity of voices and reflected a departure from dominant narratives (Styslinger et al., 2019). Layla indicated she leaned toward culturally responsive texts almost to the exclusion of "canonical" texts. Adam's text selection outlined on his syllabus prioritized many authors not considered to be part of the traditional Western canon.

Although the inclusion of multicultural texts is a significant aspect of a culturally responsive and sustaining pedagogy, "exposure to multicultural texts does not simply equal critique" (Boyd, 2017, p. 64). As such, Layla and Meena emphasized the significance of examining texts through critical lenses. They pointed out the lenses students apply to a text is of great importance. This finding supported Appleman's (2009) work on the use of critical lenses and the assertion that, although it is vital for teachers to examine texts representing a wide range of voices, it is also important teachers continue to teach canonized texts with the application of literary theory.

Pedagogy

Common pedagogical practices were seen across all cases during my analysis of the data. As evidenced in much of the literature on social justice leadership, teachers valued building relationships as a foundational pedagogical practice of social justice work in the secondary ELA classroom and the creation of a supportive classroom environment, part of Dover's (2013, 2016) three-pronged framework (Khalifa et al., 2016; Madhlangobe & Gordon, 2012; Theoharis, 2007). Participants prioritized cultivating caring relationships with their students. Specifically, Layla pointed out the importance of being genuinely curious about her students. Teachers reported how forging personal connections with their students led to increased trust and open discourse. As discussed in Chapter 2, Madhlangobe and Gordon's (2012) six-dimensional framework on culturally responsive leadership for affirming marginalized students included caring for others and building relationships. These dimensions of culturally responsive leadership, or teaching, directly impact the well-being of students and the class community. As students feel in community, they are more likely to take risks and deconstruct their biases and assumptions to examine inequities.

Strategies for Building Relationships

Teachers reported various ways they established personal connections with their students including casual check-ins or conversations during class, identity work, individualized feedback on writing, and mindfulness. Kay (2018) proposed cultivating relationships is paramount to have meaningful classroom discussions, particularly about race. Teachers should create "genuine house talk relationships" and promote unstructured chat times with their students (Kay, 2018, p. 30). Activities such as "burn 5 minutes," in which teachers take the first 5 minutes of class to

have causal conversations with their students; “good news,” in which students share good news with the class community; and “high-grade compliments,” in which students are given the opportunity to give substantive compliments to their peers, were identified as ways to foster rapport (Kay, 2018, pp. 30–32). With time devoted to informal conversations in an activity like burn 5 minutes, “students can take more risks, and our classroom culture can survive more mistakes, because students are less likely to consider our respect for their opinions either disingenuous or capricious” (Kay, 2018, p. 31).

Analyses of teacher data supported Kay’s (2018) work. Interview and observational data revealed teachers devoted time for “house talk” and individual check-ins before and during class. Teachers also reported how their individualized feedback and exchange with students about writing helped build rapport. In addition, Layla reported the integration of a mindfulness practice into the daily fabric of her classes contributed to quality relationship building. Mindfulness was also identified by Schieble et al. (2020) as one of three humanizing practices that encourages students to be intentional about the language they choose and deliberate about their responses while engaged in discussions. Last, Meena discussed the value she placed on students leaving her classroom at the end of the year with a positive feeling about their experience with her and the class community. This supported Caraballo and Soleimany’s (2019) discussion on the significant relational impact teachers can have on students.

Critical Literacy: The Examination of Multiple Perspectives

The findings from Chapter 4 illustrated all cases placed an emphasis on pedagogical practices that are a departure from banking education, such as the examination of literature using multiple perspectives, an important aspect of critical literacy and engagement and an aspect of

Dover's (2013, 2016) second dimension of her framework (Appleman, 2009; Boyd, 2017; Dover, 2016; Freire, 2018; Thein et al., 2007). As discussed, Layla interpreted social justice teaching as the exposure to multiple viewpoints that are different from dominant narratives. Though Adam and Meena did not include the examination of multiple perspectives in their initial interpretation of social justice teaching, they later discussed the significance of teaching their students to examine stories from multiple viewpoints. Adam's unit, beginning with Adichie's (2009) TED Talk: *The Danger of a Single Story* and culminating with students creating plays told through different viewpoints, was an example of his commitment to the development of perspective taking. Layla discussed the importance of using literary criticism or lens work to elicit perspective taking, which supported Appleman's (2009) assertion that when students use lenses to investigate literature, they can learn to appreciate the power of different perspectives. Meena also discussed how she has integrated critical lens work into her units to assist students in their investigation of literature "beyond the surface." For example, in her ninth grade Disney unit, students deconstructed stereotypes embedded in visual media, fairy tales, and films. From the interview data, it was apparent that all three cases placed an emphasis on building students' capacity to perspective take. Their intent supported previous findings about how viewing literature and engaging in dialogue using multiple perspectives helps develop students' critical literacy skills and furthers perspective taking as a habit of mind (Appleman, 2015; Dover, 2016; McLaughlin & DeVoogd, 2004; Thein et al., 2007).

Discussion-Centered Classrooms

As shown by the data in Chapter 4, all participants shared how they valued class discussion as a pedagogical strategy, which supported research that discussion-based classrooms

lead to increased engagement with academic content and contribute to student learning and literacy development (Bomphray, 2018; Schieble et al., 2020). Classroom observations confirmed these findings, though whole group class discussions in Adam and Meena's classrooms were more teacher led, rather than student centered; perhaps this was because observations took place at the beginning of the school year or because of the limited scope of my observations. Both Adam and Layla reported they used the Harkness discussion method (Phillips Exeter Academy, n.d.) to promote student-centered discourse, in which the teacher serves as a facilitator, demonstrates dialogic teaching, and exemplifies reciprocal generative discourse (Schieble et al., 2020). Adam articulated students are accustomed to student-centered discussions because this format has been integrated and spiraled throughout his school's life skills curriculum. Layla, however, noted her English team has been the sole department at her school that used this methodology. While observing Layla's classroom, students engaged in a Harkness discussion based on their investigation of rhetoric in Coates's (2015) *Between the World and Me*. The discussion, mirroring a college seminar with students sitting around an oval table, illustrated students posing questions and actively listening to one another while being mindful of not taking up too much space in the conversation. It was evident Harkness discussions promoted critical thinking and inquiry, related to the second dimension of Dover's (2013, 2016) framework, and active listening while also considering how students participate in a discussion. The discussion I observed demonstrated how Layla's students were "critical co-investigators in dialogue with the teacher" (Freire, 2018, p. 81) rather than "receptacles" of information (Freire, 2018, p. 72).

All cases emphasized the significance of active listening and prioritized the skill as part of their class discussions, supporting Kay's (2018) work on the development of an ecosystem

that fosters effective classroom discussions addressing race. Kay argued that active listening contributes to the foundation of a safe space where students can have difficult conversations about race. A culture of listening involves specific skills, and "students and teachers might spend their entire lives learning how to listen . . . it is one of the hardest self-improvement missions" (Kay, 2018, p. 17). Referencing Block's (2008) assertion about the power of listening to foster community, Bettez (2011) discussed critical community building beyond belonging, "Listening is the action step that replaces defending ourselves. Listening, understanding at a deeper level than is being expressed, is the action that creates a restorative community" (p. 132).

Adam and Layla also valued the practice of reflection as part of the discussion process, an integral aspect of dialogic teaching and Freirean praxis. Layla reported her students were asked to reflect on discussions after they take place, thereby building a meta-awareness of discussions. Layla used discussion rubrics as a tool for reflection and assessment of students' growth as discussion contributors; she reported she consistently shared them with her students. Her students also became accustomed to self-assessing their discussion skills and reflecting on their strengths and areas for potential growth. As part of their self-assessment, students created specific discussion goals in response to notes in Layla's rubrics. She reported her and her students' rubrics were typically in close alignment.

Other common aspects of discussions reported by participants were the use of community guidelines or class norms to ground discussions and the use of different forms of conversational structures such as pairs, small groups, and whole class discussion (Kay, 2018). Kay (2018) posited the use of one-on-one discussions, pair shares, and small learning communities foster interpersonal relationships that are the foundation for discussion models. Overall, cases indicated

they felt equipped with tools to facilitate discussions centered on inequity; however, Meena noted she would like more time to further develop ways to scaffold her class discussions, which aligned with Schieble et al.'s (2020) research that underscored how teachers would like more skills and space for reflection in their schools to address obstacles they might face while struggling to facilitate discussions, especially centered on race.

Mindfulness, Spirituality, and Well-Being

Mindfulness and spirituality were conveyed by Layla and Meena as justice-oriented teaching practices related to creating a nurturing classroom environment, an aspect of the second dimension in Dover's (2013, 2016) framework, and contributing to students' overall well-being. As noted, Layla integrated mindfulness as a daily practice to create a supportive classroom and as a tool for students to process what was happening around them, thereby supporting hooks's (2003) assertion that "teaching mindfulness about the quality of life in the classroom—that it must be nurturing, life sustaining—brings us into greater community within the classroom" (p. 173). Meena spoke about the importance of supporting the well-being of the whole child and considered the way she rooted her teaching in spirituality to be a form of "soft social justice," supporting Larson and Murtadha's (2002) examination of spirituality's critical role in social justice leadership which can be applied to teaching in the secondary ELA classroom. Larson and Murtadha (2002) posited, "spirituality is often the force that propels the activism of leaders for social justice in education" (p. 143).

Social Action and Activism

The importance of redressing issues of inequity through literature-based social action projects has been examined by researchers in the field (Boyd, 2017; Downey, 2005; Grant, 2012;

Naiditch, 2010; North, 2008; Styslinger et al., 2019). Freire's (2018) theoretical framework emphasized the importance of both reflection and action as part of the development of critical consciousness and praxis. Though participants did not incorporate the use of explicit social action projects, teachers valued reflection and articulated a commitment to assignments and assessments related to perspective taking and social justice issues. The two participants teaching at justice-oriented schools seemed less compelled to incorporate experiential social action projects because activism was already a part of their school's ethos. Meena articulated she did not feel an urgency to include social action projects as students had opportunities to engage in social action beyond her classroom. She felt more of an imperative to promote social action as a public school teacher. Whereas Layla, who taught in a more traditional independent school setting, indicated a desire to integrate social action projects into her curriculum in the future. Though all three cases did not provide authentic opportunities for social action, it was evident they were committed to their students developing the skills for critical consciousness, which might very well lead to students adopting an activist approach and was an aspect of the third dimension of Dover's (2013, 2016) framework.

Developing Critical Consciousness

All cases associated social justice teaching with addressing issues of justice and building students' awareness of themselves and the world. The strategies they prioritized, related to aspects of all three dimensions of Dover's (2013, 2016) framework, contributed to the development of students' critical consciousness even though participants did not explicitly use this term as part of their conceptualization. Teachers touched on critiquing dominant narratives and inequitable systems of power and oppression as part of their curriculum and pedagogy. They

also discussed the importance of skills that can lead to critical consciousness, particularly perspective taking. For example, Layla explained, when students have tools to talk about issues of class, race, gender, and sexuality, their eyes are opened to multiple perspectives. It was noteworthy that Adam's curriculum was rooted in the theme, "coming to consciousness," alluding to the actual process. He also pointed out the significance of inquiry, another practice related to critical engagement and part of the second dimension of Dover's (2013, 2016) framework. One of Adam's observed lessons focused on building inquiry skills. Though Layla did not emphasize inquiry during her interview, her lessons involved a great deal of question generation. As mentioned, both Adam and Layla also discussed the significance of students engaging in reflection, an integral aspect of Freire's (2018) framework. These findings supported the literature that engaging in perspective taking, inquiry, and reflection contribute to the development of critical literacy and engagement (Burke & Collier, 2017; Freire, 2018; Freire & Macedo, 2001; Naiditch, 2010; Thein et al., 2007). Furthermore, it was evident across the observational data that students were developing the aforementioned skills, though they were in their nascent stage. In the next part of this chapter, I discuss how the cases' justice-oriented practices intersected with their independent school contexts.

Research Question 2 Findings: Independent School Contexts

As discussed in Chapter 4, major findings stemming from the second research question of this study addressing how three secondary ELA educators' beliefs and practices about social justice teaching intersect with their independent school contexts related to (a) teacher autonomy, (b) opportunities for critical self-reflection, and (c) the prevalence of tensions connected to privilege and class.

Teacher Autonomy

Teacher autonomy was commonplace in the three independent school contexts that were part of the study. Overall, teachers did not face resistance from students, colleagues, or leadership regarding their justice-oriented practices. Further, there was no mention of pushback from school boards. There was, however, one instance mentioned by Layla, about several White male students questioning another teacher about reading Coates's (2015) *Between the World and Me,* labeling it as "pushing a woke agenda." She was unsure with how the teacher dealt with the resistance or if the administration intervened in some way. The resistance might reflect that her Grade 7–12 school was not rooted in a social justice mission; thus, students and/or their families might not embrace the same values as the teachers or the school. As such, some students' attitudes might not mirror the same values as their school.

As mentioned, all cases reported having the freedom to devise their own curricula and make decisions regarding their practices; however, their practices generally aligned with the mission of the school. Teachers did not face opposition from their leadership nor were they constricted by specific external mandates that have been highlighted in much of the literature reviewed on social justice teaching in the secondary ELA classroom (Bender-Slack, 2010; Dover, 2009; Navarro et al., 2020; Sleeter, 2008). In addition, teachers were rarely observed by their administration, if at all, therefore diminishing the often reported hierarchical or intimidating nature of formal observations. The lack of observations might be explained because the three cases were veteran teachers and, therefore, could be observed with less frequency, or because formal observations were simply not part of their school cultures. In contrast, observations are generally mandatory at public schools, and teachers are routinely evaluated.

Critical Learners

Though cases did not provide many distinct examples of how they engaged in critical self-reflection, it was evident from interviews that teachers took on a "critical learner stance." According to Schieble et al. (2020), a critical learner stance is:

> A mindset that embraces the possibility for challenging rethinking or developing nuanced understanding about knowledge. It requires a shift in thinking from demonstrating what we know to opening ourselves to what we don't know. (p. 24)

All cases demonstrated a commitment to deepening their critical learning, which research has suggested can assist students in becoming critical learners themselves. As examples, Adam spoke about his participation in a White antiracist alliance group that hosted workshops for participants and involved critical self-reflection. He also referenced opportunities through his school's professional development; diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) office; and the Social Justice Institute. Layla referenced her professional development opportunities outside of school and her desire to engage in future collective social justice work at her school. Meena spoke of her interest in deepening her ability to scaffold discussions on issues of equity. Moreover, all cases' willingness to participate in this very study illustrated their interest in reflecting on and deepening their practices.

Navigating Tensions of Teaching in an Elite Space

As evidenced in Chapter 4, all cases reported tensions of teaching in a privileged context. Tensions related to the navigation of White and class fragility, an imbalance of representation of students of color, and the reluctance of students to engage in discussions about social class. To address an imbalance of representation, Adam spoke of the significance of engaging his students

in reflective identity work and having them share their work with their peers. As seen from the data, teachers can also establish community guidelines or discussion norms with their students at the beginning of the school year to indicate the value of in-depth discussions, particularly centered on race (Borsheim-Black & Sarigianides, 2019). Discussion norms can lead to a variety of voices and perspectives being voiced, thereby addressing the imbalance of representation in the classroom. Layla discussed the deliberate process of creating discussion norms with her students, which attempted to address the imbalance of representation in her classroom. Layla provided examples of norms, specifically a norm stating students should not be called on to speak for or on behalf of their perceived identities. As part of their work on antiracist literature instruction for White students, Borsheim-Black and Sarigianides (2019) recommended teachers provide samples of discussion norms as they embark on a collaborative process with their students to create discussion parameters.

Teachers also addressed the imbalance of representation of students of color by encouraging their students to be aware of how they participate and take up space in whole class discussions. The Harkness methodology (Phillips Exeter Academy, n.d.), used by the majority of cases, prompts students to be reflective about their participation in discussions. Borsheim-Black and Sarigianides (2019) also recommended teachers recognize their positionality and the power it might wield related to the classroom and discussion dynamic. Layla indicated she discussed her positionality as an Eastern European with Jewish heritage, and Meena discussed how her Pakistani-American identity influenced her approach in the classroom. Last, returning to the significance of relationship building, Adam emphasized the significance of developing

meaningful relationships to create an affirming environment of trust and empathy in the classroom.

Findings related to the challenges of class discussions about social class were similar to those reported in literature on anti-oppressive education in "elite" schools (Swalwell & Spikes, 2021). Meena referenced her students' reluctance to engage in conversations concerning social class and contemplated if her 12th-grade students were uncomfortable confronting issues of class privilege or if they had not yet developed the critical faculty to discuss them. She mentioned the importance of "naming it" when facing her students' hesitancy of discussing social class. Meena's obstacles corroborated Howard's (2021) assertion that students who are typically open to discussing issues of inequity are often resistant to examining class privilege. Exploring class privilege in elite contexts necessitates regularly addressing "the elephant in the room" (Howard, 2021, p. 28, as cited in Swalwell & Spikes, 2021). This finding might speak to the fact that independent schools are selective, tuition driven, privileged contexts and reflects the inherent dilemma of using critical pedagogy, an approach intended to address issues such as socioeconomic inequity rooted in capitalism, in a school that relies on and upholds it.

Swalwell (2021) examined anti-oppressive education in elite schools by posing questions associated with the contradictory nature of elite educational spaces that do not have "easy answers" (p. 4). Swalwell (2021) used Kendi's (2019) definition of elite to underpin her interpretation of elite schooling:

> Elite has served as a synonym for people who seemingly benefit from unjust power relations—those who engage in opportunity hoarding and leveraging whatever privilege they can to ensure that systems built on white supremacy, colonialism, capitalism,

> ableism, and heteropatriarchy continue to work for them, even as they may espouse nominal support for a more just world (p. 1).

In other words, elite schools are ultimately "pipelines of institutionalized power" that can perpetuate oppressive practices rooted in structural systems (Swalwell, 2021, p. 2). Drawing on ethnographic investigations of the conflicting nature of elite schooling, Khan (2011) examined how an elite boarding school groomed its students for power (as cited in Martin, 2021). In addition, Jack's (2019) in-depth ethnographic investigation of disadvantaged students at an elite university highlighted the implicit ways in which discourses of privilege can impact their experiences, underscoring the idea that access does not guarantee inclusion. Jack also pointed out race did not seem to exclude students in the same way as social class in these spaces.

The contradictions of elite schooling led me to consider Swalwell's (2021) compelling question: Can elite independent schools ultimately be sites for social justice? It was evident from Swalwell's work and this study that there were no straightforward answers. However, after spending time researching educators at both private and public schools, which served predominantly White students, Swalwell noticed growth in students who addressed issues of injustice. Although it can be argued that teaching in elite institutions can abet oppressive systems rooted in White supremacy and capitalism, it is necessary for students in these schools to engage in anti-oppressive practices as they will likely be able to leverage their positionality toward change (Swalwell, 2021). Goodman (2000) pointed out "even though more people from oppressed groups are likely to push for greater social justice, as people from privileged groups join in the struggle, it increases the critical mass needed to affect change" (p. 2). In addition, Goodman posited that there are a good number of teachers who will have students from diverse

socioeconomic backgrounds; thus, educators should be equipped to have meaningful discourse related to issues of social justice with a wide range of students. Therefore, teachers in elite contexts require tailored pedagogical strategies for meeting and balancing the needs of both marginalized and privileged students (Goodman, 2000) but not to the detriment of marginalized students (Gorski, 2021).

Recommendations

As evidenced from the data, key themes like teachers crafting an inclusive curriculum, building relationships, using a critical approach when teaching, guiding student-centered discussions, demonstrating a critical learner stance, and navigating the tensions related to elite schooling were highlighted by all cases as part of social justice work in the secondary ELA classroom. Based on the findings yielded from the triangulated data, I have devised the following recommendations for secondary ELA teachers of independent schools and their leadership, which specifically target and speak to the necessity for ongoing professional development to address how secondary ELA teachers can further develop their capacity to (a) facilitate discussions around issues of inequity, (b) create spaces for critical self-reflection, and (c) capitalize on additional programming at their schools to reinforce their social justice work.

Facilitating Discussions

As evidenced from the findings, cases placed great value on student-centered, literature-based discussions as a dimension of dialogic teaching, aligning with much of the literature supporting critical dialogue in the classroom. However, Meena indicated she would like to deepen her ability to scaffold and facilitate discussions in her classroom. I recommend teachers, even experienced ones, continue to further their capacity to nurture student-centered discussions.

Research has indicated teachers are seeking strategies for guiding critical conversations and seeking spaces for reflection in their schools to address obstacles they might face while facilitating discussions with their students, particularly those centered on race (Borsheim-Black & Sarigianides, 2019; Schieble et al., 2020). According to Kay (2018), many teachers believe that only certain educators have the skills to lead impactful discussions about race. Kay (2018) posited, "to shift the safe space conversation from the realm of magical thinking to a more practical-skills-based approach" (p. 17), it is crucial for teachers to acquire effective strategies for facilitating class dialogue.

I recommend teachers work toward building their own "emotive capacities" as part of developing one's ability to facilitate discussions (Murray-Johnson & Guerra, 2018, p. 14). When engaging in critical dialogue, teachers must try to possess, "the ability to hold one's own emotional responses in abeyance while listening to others who are just as emotionally laden" (Manglitz et al., 2014, p. 113). Murray-Johnson and Guerra (2018) contended the cultivation of emotive capacity necessitates "developing mechanisms to confront silence, negotiate tension and anxiety, and deal with issues of privilege for both facilitator and learner audience" (p. 14). Opportunities for critical self and collective reflection can assist teachers' development of their emotive capacities.

Professional Development and Teacher Observations

Professional development opportunities, ideally teacher driven or led, that target the facilitation of student-centered discussion, especially around topics of inequity, could greatly benefit teachers (Zein, 2016). As shown in this study, discussion strategies that address privilege, the intersection of class and race, and other social identifiers should be part of this work. Skills

such as facilitating generative discussions, employing different conversational structures, and navigating silence would be beneficial for secondary ELA teachers to explore as part of professional development (Kay, 2018; Schieble et al., 2020). In addition, deliberate time devoted to leadership, peer-to-peer observations focused on discussion skills, and subsequent time for meetings and reflection would assist teachers in honing these skills. As noted, there were limited opportunities for classroom observations across all cases. All participants reported they were not regularly observed by their leadership. Evaluations or observations with supportive leadership can be an integral part of professional development and conducive to dialogue about best practices and goals related to social justice work.

Opportunities for Critical Self-Reflection

I recommend teachers have space for ongoing critical self and collective reflection, which should be integrated into professional development keeping in mind that teachers "are at different entry points in their critical consciousness" (Schieble et al., 2020, p. 63). Kay (2018) noted, although students might feel comfortable with their peers, teachers' lack of developed interpersonal skills can compromise conversations centered on race. Critical self-reflection, an essential practice of questioning one's biases, values, and assumptions, is integral for sustainable social justice teaching and social justice initiatives in the classroom. When teachers engage in their own identity work, they are more likely to engage in identity work with their students. Further, it is especially critical for White teachers to examine their positionality and how their racial identities might impact their approach to teaching (Borsheim-Black & Sarigianides, 2019). Though it was apparent that all cases embraced a critical learner stance (Schieble et al., 2020), Layla noted there were not sufficient opportunities for explicit critical self-reflection.

Teacher Alliances

As discussed in Chapter 4, Layla indicated she would like to be part of a collective focused on social justice work at her school. When social justice does not underpin the philosophy of a school, I recommend teachers create social justice teaching alliances with other like-minded teachers. Teachers can establish networks such as professional learning committees with other teachers committed to social justice work within or outside of their schools (Burke & Collier, 2017; Dover, 2016; Navarro et al., 2020; Picower, 2011; Ritchie, 2012). Although all cases demonstrated a commitment to social justice teaching, Khalifa et al. (2016) underscored teachers can continue to develop their social justice dispositions over time.

School Programming to Support Social Justice Work

As shown in the data, I recommend schools adopt programs like AOTA's life skills curriculum and HP's advisory program and town hall assemblies. These types of programming provide additional spaces for students to engage in critical dialogue and can augment and reinforce the skills being practiced and in their ELA classes. Adam and Meena reported these programs afforded additional socioemotional support for students and provided opportunities to have discussions around inequity. Additionally, I recommend consistent designated time and space for student-led affinity groups and cross-affinity group dialogue and action. As demonstrated in the data, affinity groups provided space for open dialogue, especially pertaining to tensions within the independent schools. However, comments made by members of the women of color affinity group, which Meena advised at HP, indicated that additional work and dialogue are needed to support students of color and to address inequities that are reproduced in an educational space where students with diverse social identities and lived experiences learn

together. Meena’s account speaks to the “unfinished nature” (Ahmed, 2012, p. 11) of justice work and might reflect performative aspects of independent schools that have social justice central to their mission. Schools with justice-oriented missions might have, as Ahmed (2012) described, “the shiny veneer of diversity [social justice]” (p. 113), yet beyond the façade of the mission, tensions rooted in inequity continue to persist. Exploring diversity work in higher education, Ahmed (2012) pointed out that often “it can be assumed that equality [social justice] is achieved in the act . . . it is as if having a policy becomes a substitute for action” (p. 11). Although independent schools like those in the study purport to be committed to justice-oriented principles rooted in their missions and have implemented policies that reflect them, translation to action must be ongoing. In the next section, I discuss suggestions for future research on teaching for social justice in the secondary ELA classroom.

Future Research

As I approached this study, it was evident that more research was needed to investigate how social justice teaching in the secondary ELA classroom is conceptualized and enacted in independent schools as they are potential incubators for justice-oriented practices and free from restrictive external accountability mandates. The triangulated data from this qualitative multicase study provided three examples of how secondary ELA teachers perceived and implemented social justice teaching in their independent school contexts. All cases were teachers serving at college preparatory schools, with two of the schools founded on social justice missions.

Though there have been assumptions made about the nature of independent schools, findings revealed there was meaningful and efficacious justice-oriented teaching happening in these schools, leading to the development of critical dispositions. However, because I conducted

a bounded multicase study, I could only capture a specific moment in time. Therefore, the scope of my research was particularistic (Merriam, 1998). Findings were constrained to data collected from demographic questionnaires, interviews, limited classroom observations, and class syllabi over the course of just a few months.

Future research focused on teaching for social justice in the secondary ELA classroom could be expanded or furthered in the following ways:

1. An ethnographic investigation or longitudinal study could investigate how secondary ELA educators in independent schools conceptualize and enact social justice teaching and how their beliefs and practices about social justice teaching intersect with their independent school contexts. This would afford additional time to observe the implementation of social justice pedagogy and its outcomes over the course of time. The proposed study could also be more targeted, specifically examining one of the themes discussed from the study's data such as student-centered discussion models, critical lens work, or how secondary ELA teachers navigate tensions of teaching in elite contexts (i.e., how teachers address the needs of marginalized students with racially, financially, and otherwise privileged students in their classrooms).
2. A comparative study with a larger sample size of secondary ELA teachers in independent schools representing a wider range of intersecting identities could increase the validity of the data and provide additional insight into ways teachers are implementing justice-oriented practices in their classrooms and how structural aspects of their schools affect their work at a broader scale. Additionally, a comparative study could be conducted on the similarities and differences of teaching for social justice in

the secondary ELA classroom in a variety of school contexts. The three independent schools selected for this multicase study were not accountable to mandates like Common Core State Standards and high-stakes testing (California Department of Education, 2022). Teachers' class sizes were relatively small compared with those in public schools. Therefore, they are not representative of many public schools in Southern California. An in-depth analysis of social justice teaching in the secondary ELA classroom might differ based on factors such as a school's student population, the number of students with Individualized Education Plans, and graduation rates. Research comparing different types of schools might reveal if these factors affect the enactment of social justice teaching in the secondary ELA classroom.

3. A study focused on student voice would help elucidate the impact of social justice teaching in the secondary ELA classroom. The proposed research could explore how teaching secondary ELA through a social justice lens potentially leads to critical consciousness and future social action and engagement. It could also focus on the exploration of other student outcomes, which Dover (2009) also recommended.
4. In relation to student voice, more research is needed to examine minoritized students' experiences in independent school secondary ELA classrooms to guide schools and their faculties in the evaluation of effective teacher practices for affirming student voice and supporting student learning and well-being. Martin's (2021) narrative case study, *Counterstories of Black High School Students and Graduates of NYC Independent Schools*, provided great insight into the experiences of Black students in elite school contexts and critical practices such as building relationships and

culturally responsive and sustaining curricula to assist in their well-being. Further research is needed on how secondary ELA teachers can better support students in their classrooms navigate tensions related to race, class, gender, sexuality, religion, ability, and so on in an independent school context.

5. Too often, ability and neurodivergence are missing from social justice discourse, particularly pertaining to teaching in the secondary ELA classroom. More research is necessary to learn how secondary ELA teachers are addressing students with varying abilities from the lens of social justice in independent school contexts and how structural aspects of these schools might support or hamper those practices.

Conclusion

I initially set out to study secondary ELA teachers engaging in social justice work in the independent school context. This ultimately led me to explore Swalwell's (2021) more complex existential question stemming from the contradictory nature of independent schooling: Can elite educational spaces be leveraged as sites for justice? Despite being elite spaces where privilege is propagated, as evidenced from this study, there is strong social justice teaching happening in independent schools, and they can and must be sites for social justice (Swalwell, 2021). Research indicated social justice education in privileged spaces can help students identify inequities and "assists affluent students to recognize and respond to the demands of redistribution of power as expressions of justice" (Huchting & Bickett, 2021, p. 214). Furthermore, the implementation of social justice work in the secondary ELA classroom can contribute to the development of students' critical consciousness, which can lead to the disruption of dominant norms and systemic inequities.

At the onset of this study, I assumed independent justice-oriented schools would be incubators of social justice practices. I did not discover new practices implemented, but I did observe that key practices identified in the literature were prevalent across all cases. It was apparent independent schools with justice-oriented missions supported teachers' practices. That said, Layla's school, though not founded with a social justice mission, also supported her justice-oriented work. In addition, programming embedded in the justice-oriented schools, such as life skills, advisory, and town hall assemblies, provided additional infrastructure to reinforce teachers' social justice work.

Although the justice-oriented practices of secondary ELA teachers in independent schools such as building caring relationships, facilitating discussions around equity, and incorporating mindfulness and spirituality are not new, they are indeed innovative. Often, teaching in an innovative way is not about coming up with new ideas, it is about how ideas can be transformed (Dyer et al., 2019). In an interview I conducted with Senator Cory Booker on innovation and education, he defined an innovator as "someone who can see things in this world that don't exist yet . . . that has the guts, gumption, grit, and spiritual power to make them a reality" (personal communication, July 13, 2022). Secondary ELA teachers working for social justice are indeed innovators as they possess the guts, gumption, grit, and spiritual power to push students' thinking by tackling issues of inequity for the sake of growth and justice.

EPILOGUE

I am an American, Jewish, White, female, heterosexual, financially advantaged, English speaking, neurotypical, able-bodied, wife/partner, mother, daughter, and sister. As part of my doctoral work, I have continued to reflect on aspects of my positionality, particularly my Whiteness. I have benefitted from my Whiteness; however, as a person of Jewish heritage, my family and I have felt the sting of antisemitism. I am not considered "White" by certain groups; however, my White appearance and privilege have resulted in access to people and places of power. Therefore, I have been at the intersection of privilege and what it means to be othered. This has informed my curricular and pedagogical practices, particularly using the power of narrative to examine inequities.

Another social identifier I have also thought a great deal about is my class. I have traversed different socioeconomic communities, attending private educational institutions and teaching in city public schools. When I began devising this study, I set out to investigate teaching for social justice in the secondary ELA public school classroom. Upon realizing the gap in research in teaching for social justice in secondary ELA classrooms in independent schools and reflecting on the decision to send my sons to them, I changed the context of my study to deepen my understanding of the practices found at these schools. I realized my inquiry into justice work in the independent school context mirrored an ongoing inner conflict I have grappled with for years. Can private educational institutions be bastions for justice-driven work, or do they perpetuate and reproduce privilege? Like Swalwell (2021), who asked if elite schools can be sites for social justice, I did not find tidy or straightforward answers. But it was evident from my study that independent secondary ELA teachers were dedicated to and enacted meaningful social

justice work with their students. Collaborating with these teachers helped me realize my years spent honing my practices while teaching English at a New York City public school very much aligned with those being implemented today at the independent schools that were part of this study.

APPENDIX A

TEACHER DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

Please fill out the following information. Skip any question you do not wish to answer.

Indicate the gender identity with which you most identify. What pronouns do you prefer?

____

Race/ethnicity: ____

Sexual orientation: ____

Age: ________

Native language: ____

Are there other ways you describe yourself that you wish to share?

What is your educational background? What was your schooling like?

How and where did you prepare to become a teacher?

Why did you become a secondary ELA teacher? How many years have you been practicing as a secondary ELA teacher?

What types of schools have you worked in prior to your current school context?

How many years have you been teaching at your current school?

How do you describe the racial/ethnic and socioeconomic makeup of the student body at your school (Dover, 2010)?

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

INTERVIEW 1 (Teacher background and conceptualization of social justice teaching):

1. How were you prepared to teach secondary English language arts? How did social justice play a role in your preparation? (Carlisle et al., 2006; Grant & Agosto, 2008; Matteson & Boyd, 2017)
2. How did you find your way to your school? What about the school spoke to you when you were looking to teach English?
3. Why did you choose to work at an independent school?
4. How did the school's philosophy prompt you to teach here?
5. There are many definitions of social justice teaching which can include approaches such as multicultural education, democratic education, critical pedagogy, culturally responsive education, ethnic studies, anti-oppressive education, and antiracist and antibias education? Throughout the interview, I will use social justice teaching as a term for various equity and justice-oriented approaches. How might you define teaching for social justice? Do you consider yourself a teacher for social justice (Agarwal et al., 2010; Cochran-Smith, 2004; Dover, 2009; Giroux, 1992; NCTE, 2021)?
6. What does social justice teaching mean to you specifically in the secondary ELA classroom?
7. What do you consider to be important aspects of teaching for social justice in the secondary ELA classroom?
8. How does your identity intersect with your teaching?

INTERVIEW 2 (Curriculum, pedagogy, and social action):

1. What are your goals for your students this year?
2. How do you go about devising your curriculum? What do you prioritize?
3. How do you select your texts? Do you include canonized texts, culturally responsive texts, some of both (Appleman, 2009; Bender-Slack, 2010)?
4. How do you ensure your curriculum is inclusive (Carlisle et al., 2006)?
5. How might your curriculum be rooted in social justice?
6. How are curricular, pedagogical, and social action elements grounded in social justice teaching integrated into your teaching (Dover, 2013, 2016)?
7. There are many avenues teachers can take to teach for social justice (Boyd, 2017; Cochran-Smith, 2004). Can you share some examples of social justice practices you prioritize and implement in your classroom? What do they look like?
8. How might you incorporate literary theory or lens work with your students (Appleman, 2009)?
9. How do your students learn to perspective take (Styslinger et al., 2019; Thein et al., 2007)?
10. What are ways you get your students to develop critical dispositions (Freire, 2018; Styslinger et al., 2019)?
11. How do you create a supportive, caring classroom environment? How do you create a classroom space that affirms and sustains students' intersecting identities (Dover, 2013, 2016; Lalas, 2007, p. 25; Navarro et al., 2020; Paris & Alim, 2017)?

12. What do class discussions look like in your class? How do students learn how to participate in class discussion (Schieble et al., 2020)?
13. How do you create space for classroom dialogue? What do classroom conversations look and feel like in your class? Are there any protocols or scaffolding in place to support critical dialogue (Schieble et al., 2020)?
14. What kinds of opportunities are there for students to participate in social action projects stemming from their reading in your classroom (Boyd, 2017; Downey, 2005; Grant, 2012; Naiditch, 2010; North, 2008; Styslinger et al., 2019).
15. Do you consider yourself an activist? How should activism and teaching intersect (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Dover, 2013, 2016)?

INTERVIEW 3 (Questions from classroom observations/governance structure/outcomes):

1. What were your primary objectives for each lesson I observed? In what ways, if any, did the lessons I observed connect to social justice teaching?
2. How might the lessons I observed have critically engaged students?
3. What kinds of opportunities do you have to engage in critical self-reflection (Agarwal et al., 2010; Martin et al., 2016; Schieble et al., 2020)?
4. How has the leadership supported or furthered your teaching?
5. How has the school culture supported or furthered your justice-oriented practices?
6. Have you received pushback from your administration, parents, or board members regarding your teaching practices?
7. What kind of opportunities do you have to collaborate with your colleagues? What opportunities do you have to collaborate regarding issues of social justice (Burke & Collier, 2017; Huchting & Bickett, 2021; Navarro et al., 2020)?
8. How is professional development implemented in your school context? What types of professional development have you engaged in that have furthered your justice-oriented approaches? Do you seek professional development outside of school (Burke & Collier, 2017; Navarro et al., 2020)?
9. What might be the tensions of engaging in social justice teaching in an “elite” or privileged context? What are the challenges you have faced in your school (Swalwell & Spikes, 2021)?
10. What do you want your students to come away with after you have taught them? Are there specific outcomes you are looking for?

APPENDIX C

CLASSROOM OBSERVATION TOOL

<table>
<tr><td>Date:

Time:

School:

Teacher:

Class:

Physical layout of classroom:</td><td>Objectives of lesson:

Structure of lesson:</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Keywords/Summary:</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Is there evidence of the following practices?

Curriculum:

Lens work/Critical theory

Critical literacy/critical text analysis/instruction focused on challenging inequities

Culturally and linguistically relevant/responsive-sustaining curriculum

Pedagogy:

Antiracist and antibias teaching

Inclusive, caring environment

Critical dialogue</td></tr>
</table>

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">Student-centered discussion

Active listening

Inquiry-based discussion

Perspective taking

Critical reflection

Social Action:

Critical engagement/critical consciousness/challenging inequities

Social action projects

Activism</td></tr>
<tr><td>FIELD NOTES (Observations/Quotes)</td><td>REFLECTION</td></tr>
</table>

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