

**EXPLORING NEW TEACHERS' UNDERSTANDINGS AND
PRACTICE OF SOCIAL JUSTICE EDUCATION**

by

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study examines the narratives of twenty-seven new teachers on the construction of their understandings of social justice and how these understandings inform/influence their practice as they begin their careers. This research is framed by sociocultural theories, theories of agency and praxis, communities of practice and professional knowledge landscapes. As well, this study is informed by pedagogical and philosophical perspectives of social justice education that examine how teachers' beliefs, values and worldviews inform their identities and/or pedagogy.

At the time of fieldwork, the participants had all graduated from a teacher education program focused on issues of social justice and were in their first, second, or third year of teaching. Analysis of the participants' narratives, gathered in semi-structured interviews, indicates that their initial understandings of social justice are informed by discourses constructed in their families. Other discourses on education, sociocultural affiliations, work and volunteer experiences further shape those understandings as they move away from the figured world of families. These discourses inform participants' definitions of social justice, which in turn influence the types of social justice they create for their students.

Their discourses on grappling with social justice in the context of teaching indicates that teaching assignment realities, curriculum and support either encourage or discourage new teachers from incorporating social justice into their practice. Thus, the extent to which new teachers are able to incorporate social justice into their practice can be related a number of identifying characteristics, dispositions and conditions.

Key Words: Social justice education; teacher education; Canadian context; new teacher experiences; new teacher dispositions; identity; qualitative research

*This thesis is dedicated to those passionate teachers
who inspire their students to become agents of social change.*

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“You must be the change you wish to see in the world”
Mahatma Gandhi

CHAPTER 1

FRAMING THE RESEARCH

As the population changes to include people with diverse voices, cultures, religions, beliefs, values and worldviews, there have been increasing calls to address issues of social justice in a variety of educational contexts. Whether presented as culturally relevant teaching, teaching against the grain, teaching for diversity, multicultural social justice education, or anti-oppressive education, discourses on social justice education have captured the interest of several educational researchers throughout the past decade (Adams, 2000; Cochran-Smith, 2004; Kumashiro, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Sleeter & Grant, 2007; Zeichner, 1993). Although topics of social justice have become more prevalent in teacher education research, according to researchers (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005; Hollins & Guzman, 2005; Sleeter, 2001), until recently many of the studies have focused on preservice teacher beliefs and experiences and few have followed teacher education graduates once they have left universities and entered the teaching profession. Furthermore, literature on teacher education research focused on social justice education demonstrates that Canadian research contexts are underrepresented.

While my previous research (Philpott 2002; 2005) addresses experienced teachers' understandings of social responsibility in a particular British Columbian (BC) school setting, this study considers another stage in professional life to examine new teachers' understandings and practice of social justice education. Thus, after examining experienced teachers' understandings, I began exploring social justice in the context of teacher education. This in turn sparked a curiosity about *new teachers'* experiences,

understandings and practice of social justice education as they moved from BC university programs to begin their careers. Two overarching research questions thus frame this current study:

1. How do new teachers construct their understandings of social justice?
2. How do those understandings inform/influence their practices as they begin their careers?

Underpinning this research are the assumptions that beliefs inform practice (Delpit, 1995; Palmer, 1998), and that teachers need safe places to tell their personal and professional stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995). Based on these assumptions, this study examines the discourses¹ of twenty-seven new teachers as they grapple with social justice in their first years of teaching. In sharing narrative accounts of experiences that evolve over the course of their lives, these new teachers provide insight into how understandings of social justice develop and inform/influence teaching practice. By engaging them in discussions about social justice understandings and teaching practice, I discovered that new teachers had many stories about their struggles and successes waiting to be told. I suggest that narrative research provides a valuable tool for uncovering new teachers' stories that can lead us to a better understanding of identity construction, teacher education and social justice.

¹ Throughout this study I refer to 'discourse' as a collection of recurring/common ideas, thoughts, attitudes, beliefs and practices that describe specific understandings and interpretations. I also refer to Gee (1999) whose theory of discourse distinguishes discourse (with a small "d") as "language-in-us or stretches of language (like conversations or stories)" from Discourse (with a capital "D"), which he described as "ways of using language. . . to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group" (p. 17).

1.1 The Face of Education Today

It is apparent that the face of education is changing radically². Researchers in Canada, the UK, the USA and Australia highlight concerns that an increasingly homogenous population of teachers are now teaching an increasingly heterogeneous population of students (Johnson, 2002; Levine-Rasky, 2001; Mills, 2007; Milner & Smithey, 2003; Schick & St. Denis, 2005; Villegas & Lucas, 2002; Zeichner, 2006a/b). Most, if not all these researchers express specific concerns that teacher education programs have historically attracted, and continue to attract, a predominantly Caucasian, female, middle-class preservice teacher population. Cross (2005, p. 266) argues, that as this trend continues, systems that privilege Whiteness, power and racism are increasingly reinforced, and “the same ole’ oppression [that] objectifies, dehumanizes, and marginalizes others” is perpetuated. Furthermore, researchers note that a significant number of these Caucasian preservice teachers originate from homogeneous community and school experiences where they have had few opportunities to engage with others from diverse ethnic, cultural, racial, socio-economic backgrounds (Allard & Santoro, 2004, 2006; Causey et al., 2000; Coville-Hall, MacDonald & Smolen, 1995; Haberman, 2005; Sleeter, 2001). Consequently, all of these researchers make explicit the need to actively recruit a more racially and culturally diverse population to the teaching profession. While continuing to address the overwhelming need to attract such a population, I argue that at the same time we need to be examining continually how we are educating the predominantly Caucasian female teachers to work with diversity. Moreover, as teacher educators and researchers, we need to examine how we are able, or

unable, to develop in teachers an increased awareness and understanding of issues of social justice.

1.2 Situating the Context of Social Justice Education in BC

In the past eight years, teachers in BC schools have been using the Ministry of Education *BC Performance Standards - Social Responsibility* (Government of British Columbia, 2000) as a framework to guide instruction and assess student achievement in social responsibility. However, as of 2007, a new secondary school elective course, *Social Justice 12* has been introduced (Government of British Columbia, 2007). Where the social responsibility standards focus mainly on caring for each other and the environment, the *Social Justice 12* curriculum asks teachers and senior secondary students to engage with perspectives and issues of injustice (such as racism, heterosexism, homophobia, stereotyping, imperialism, oppression, etc.). As of September 2008, this new elective on social justice is being implemented in seven BC secondary schools and, starting September 2009, it will be available for implementation in all “interested” schools. However, for one particular school district, concerns about the course content may keep this curriculum forever shelved. For this very conservative school district, discussions about issues such as homophobia and heterosexism have no place in schools:

The course is just too problematic, explains [the] School District superintendent.

"Some of the content is clearly controversial," he said yesterday, speaking to

homosexual references that appear in the course outline. (Hutchinson, 2008)

² Levine-Rasky (2001) notes that “visible minorities” will constitute 20% of the Canadian population by 2016 and 47% of the American population by 2050. Cross (2003) notes that in 1999, 85% of public school teachers in America were White (this statistical demographic is expected to increase annually).

Although I question the motivation behind this particular school district's reasons for rejecting the *Social Justice 12* curriculum, I think some interesting points have emerged through student protests (after "accidental" approval of the course by one school was withdrawn) and media probing. One thing that became evident is that students want opportunities to engage in discussions about difficult and controversial issues that ultimately affect them and the world in general. The other point that surfaced, and is of particular relevance to my research, is the question of *who* will be teaching the curriculum. In a letter sent to the Ministry of Education, the superintendent of this particular school district expressed this concern,

What's more, teachers might be saddled with too much "personal bias" to teach the course effectively. Without proper training and background knowledge, teachers might mishandle the course material. The result could be counterproductive: a classroom of children "more biased and less tolerant of opposing beliefs because of misinformation". (Hutchinson, 2008)

Added to this, is the voice of the Conservative BC Parents and Teachers for Life,

"Although the course . . . will deal with many topics worthy of students' consideration, it is -- due to bias and lack of specified direction -- a course which allows for the possibility of gross abuse on the part of the teacher who might choose to use it to propagandize for his own particular viewpoint" said president Ted Hewlett. (Steffenhagen, 2008)

What struck me about these two newspaper excerpts, is not the undertone of community and interest groups' obvious biases toward the curriculum content itself, but the concerns about through *whose* perspectives and biases these issues of social justice

will be taught. Moreover, I might argue that underlying the above discourses, are concerns that *Social Justice 12* will not be taught from the *preferred* biases and perspectives of the particular interest groups the school district or Mr. Hewlett represent. There is no denying that this curriculum, more so than other curriculum, is about examining beliefs, perspectives, values and worldviews. So *how* it is taught, or from *what perspective* it is taught, could potentially have a profound effect (whether negative, or positive) on students' understandings of each other and the world. So I agree, this is an issue of concern. We all hold biases, beliefs and worldviews specific to our own experiences, interactions and ascribed social identities/locations. However, if as Delpit (1998) argues, "we teach through our beliefs" (p. 280), then as teachers it is imperative that we are aware of those beliefs and biases and that we understand how these inform/influence our practice. So, although I applaud the efforts of the Ministry of Education to move curriculum to a place where it could compel students to initiate social change, I am concerned that once again as teachers we might be jumping in before engaging in dialogue about the complexities this new curriculum might present. This is not to suggest we abandon this challenging and significant curriculum. On the contrary, the dissonance generated by introducing this curriculum suggests that it is in fact *exactly* what we need to spark a dialogue about *how* our beliefs and perspectives inform/influence our pedagogy. However, my fear is that all the attention will focus on this one school district's conservative views and motivations, and as a result opportunities for *all* teachers, parents, students and districts to engage in this critical dialogue might be lost.

Is not the real concern here about whether or not the teachers who are implementing, or planning to implement this curriculum have indeed engaged in dialogue and self-reflection about their own personal beliefs, biases, perspectives and worldviews? Or whether or not these teachers have engaged in dialogue and/or professional development where they have been asked to examine how their beliefs, biases and worldviews influence how they teach a particular curriculum? Or whether or not these teachers have explored the complexities of teaching in a way that makes space for a variety of voices, perspectives and beliefs to emerge?

The concerns unearthed by this particular district's refusal to implement the *Social Justice 12* curriculum confirms why it is timely and imperative to engage in this current research – a study that asks graduates of a teacher education program focused on social justice to reflect on how they have come to understand social justice through the experiences and discourses of family, friends, education, travel and work. Moreover, it is research that asks them to reflect on how those understandings have informed/influenced their practices as they assume the challenging and complex role of *Teacher*.

1.3 Situating the Researcher

We do not really see through our eyes,
or hear through our ears,
but through our beliefs
(Delpit, 1988).

For most researchers, the topics and issues we choose to explore generally reflect our passions and parallel our own personal and professional journeys. For me this definitely rings true. Professionally, this research adds a layer of knowledge to my experiences as a teacher, teacher educator and graduate student. But beyond the

professional, the topic and structure of this dissertation reflect and parallel my own personal journey, my own “coming to consciousness” (Bakhtin, 1981). To understand the impetus behind this study, it is important to understand *who* I am as a person, the social identity I have been ascribed, and how these characteristics influence who I am as a teacher and why it is I have chosen to explore new teachers’ understandings and practices of social justice. Moreover, just as I have asked the participants in this research to share narratives about their evolving personal and professional lives by reflecting on the discourses of family, sociocultural affiliations, education, travel and work, I believe it is essential that I too reflect on these same discourses.

1.3.1 *Researcher Interest in this Topic*

I am a Caucasian, heterosexual, middle-class woman coming from rural small-town roots. My mother, a former teacher and businesswoman, and father, a local businessman, were highly respected members of the community. Our family reflected middle-class, racial and cultural “norms” prevalent in this particular small town. In essence, by virtue of birth, I was assigned a privileged social identity. However, as with all people, my identity was further shaped by specific life events, interactions and circumstances.

My parents, thirsting for adventure, often took us traveling to explore, and live for a short time, in a variety of nations and cultures. However, growing up in a small resource dependent town, it was clear that maybe our family was not exactly “the norm”. In fact, as I became older I realized that my family was able to give us opportunities unknown to many of my peers. And, although initially these experiences of privilege left

me feeling a bit separate from my friends, it also offered me new possibilities for viewing the world.

The context of the small town in which I grew up is also significant as it shaped the discourses and beliefs I held unquestioningly during my childhood. This small rural town was flanked to the west by a once standing residential school (demolished in the 1960s when I was a small girl), and a First Nations reserve to the south. My only encounters with the First Nations people, who were referred to as “those lazy Indians”, was when they came through town to shop for groceries or drink at the local bars. The First Nations children were generally bussed from the reserve to a Catholic school close to the town centre; however, they generally stayed on, or near the school grounds and we kept our distance, until they were taken back home. Needless to say, I did not witness many positive interactions with the First Nations people and looking back it is obvious that racism was pervasive in my community. It should be noted that in this recounting my purpose is to acknowledge that these were the commonly accepted *normative* attitudes and behaviours pervasive in small town British Columbia (BC) in the 60s and 70s, attitudes and behaviours that nobody questioned.

After a brief foray in the fashion industry, and a three-month trip to Europe, I literally fell into a preschool teaching job. It was then that I discovered my passion for working with children and began to pursue a teaching career. It was during my first years as a college student that I truly began to explore my privileged identity, beliefs, and social location. In courses specifically centered on *Canadian* history, cultural geography and literature, instructors introduced me to alternate perspectives and engaged me in debates that brought my cultural and social identity into sharp focus. It was in that

context I began exploring the misunderstandings, misinformation and fears about the First Nations people in Canada. It is also there that I began seeking out people who challenged my beliefs by offering alternate perspectives.

After this initial “awakening” there was no going back. From then on, it seems my life has continued on a pathway of *coming to consciousness* about many issues of social justice. I am not so naïve, or so arrogant as to assume that I have been successful in obliterating every bias and negative belief I have ever held. However, I do feel I have committed a lifetime to awareness by exploring and challenging myself to continually grow and evolve. And it seems that as part of this evolution, I am compelled to open myself up to new personal and professional experiences and possibilities. So over the years, while teaching in public elementary schools, I pursued undergraduate and graduate coursework focused specifically on issues of social justice and teachers acting as agents of social change. And in all of these courses, I have been challenged repeatedly to examine my own beliefs, values, worldview and pedagogy. In addition to this, by building on a career that was heavily influenced by the very innovative and progressive teaching practices of my mother, I have shaped and reshaped my own teaching practice. Although twice, feeling completely disillusioned, I have left the teaching profession to travel and work overseas, I have always returned. And in returning, I have dug deeper into my own understandings and practices and have been challenged to examine my role in the teaching profession. As a result, the discoveries that evolved from my graduate research as a Master’s student led me to teacher education. Now, while engaging in this current research, exploring new teachers’ understandings and practice, I am once again considering where it is I need to go next on this personal and professional journey.

1.4 Organization of Thesis

This section provides an overview of the thesis and the organization of the chapters that follow. In the first section of Chapter Two, I use sociocultural theories of Bakhtin (1981) and Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner and Cain (1998) to provide a lens for analyzing new teachers' perceptions and understandings as they explore their own identities in relation to what it means to practice social justice education. Also I present Freire's (1970; 1998) theories of agency and praxis, Wenger's (1998) theory of "communities of practice" and Clandinin and Connelly's (1995) theory of "professional knowledge landscapes" to frame discussions on new teacher practice and induction. In the second section of Chapter Two, I present definitions and discourses of social justice that also include a Canadian perspective. Afterward I review pedagogical and philosophical perspectives that frame social justice education and examine how teachers' beliefs, values and worldviews inform identities and/or influence teaching practice. Finally, I explore new teacher mentorship programs.

In Chapter Three, I outline the methodology framing this research and situate this study within a qualitative paradigm and a constructivist-interpretive epistemology. I look at the research base and agenda proposed by researchers (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005; Hollins & Guzman, 2005) and situate my own research in educational discourses on teaching for social justice. Further to this, I discuss a multiple case-study approach (Stake, 2005), narrative inquiry and semi-structured interview methods (Gillham, 2000; LeCompte & Preissle, 1993; Olesen, 2005) and examine the complexities of my multiple roles.

In the two interpretive chapters (Chapters 4 & 5), I use the metaphor of montage to present participants' varied narratives about social justice education. The first montage, presented in Chapter Four, explores the participants' discourses on the origins of their understandings and interpretations of social justice. The second montage, presented in Chapter Five, builds on the previous montage to examine the complexities and challenges the participants faced when trying to incorporate social justice into their teaching practice. Finally, in Chapter 6, I "assemble the pieces" through analysis and offer my personal reflections and recommendations.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, I introduce relevant theoretical, philosophical and pedagogical perspectives to examine how new teachers construct their understandings of social justice education and how these understandings inform their practice as they begin their careers.

In the first part of this chapter, I draw on theoretical constructs advanced by Bakhtin (1981) and Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner and Cain (1998) to explore how identities and understandings are formed through dialogue and interactions with others and with the world. More specifically, I examine new teachers' perceptions as they delve into understanding their own identities in relation to what it means to practice social justice education. I then consider ideas of agency and praxis introduced by Freire (1970) and link these to notions of communities of practice presented by Wenger (1998). Closely connected to these theories are concepts of new teacher experiences as they navigate the "professional knowledge landscapes" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995) and grapple with belonging during induction into the profession.

In the next section of this chapter, I begin by highlighting various definitions of social justice and examining educational discourses on social justice education. Next, I offer a Canadian perspective by outlining a discourse on social responsibility prevalent in the British Columbia curriculum (Government of British Columbia, 2001). Following this, I explore pedagogical and philosophical perspectives that frame social justice education. I begin with interpretations of what it means to teach for social justice or act as an agent for change. In analyzing this latter notion, I outline abilities, experiences and predispositions that compel preservice and practicing teachers to act as agents of social

change. As well, I investigate the concept of evolving identities and consider how new teachers' beliefs, values and worldviews impact their teaching practice. I then draw on philosophical perspectives to examine how moral agency and social location are relevant to teaching for social justice. Finally, I inquire into the complexities of trying to shift new teachers' beliefs, values and worldviews through teacher education programs and discuss new teacher mentorship and induction.

2.1 Theoretical Lenses Framing the Research

Understanding who we are, where we have come from, and where we are heading guides us in explorations of the “self,” and the relationship between “self” and “others” (Bakhtin, 1981; Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998). Constructs of identity and the discursive construction of the self provide a relevant heuristic for analyzing how new teachers delve into issues related to their identities and their practice of social justice education. I then explore how Bakhtin and Holland et al. discuss the notion “identity in process” and its evolution from a composite of voices and worldviews. These theorists argue that one is not simply a *result* of parental, social or cultural influences, but a *work in progress* influenced by new characters, scenarios and evolving life dramas. For teachers, these life dramas unfold on “professional knowledge landscapes” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995) as they construct professional and personal meanings through dialogue and relationships with one another in “communities of practice” (Wenger, 1998). And, according to Freire (1970; 1998), how teachers choose to engage with, or act upon understandings gleaned from participating in these communities will determine whether social and educational change is stimulated or thwarted.

2.1.1 Authoritative and Internally Persuasive Discourses

As a philosopher, Bakhtin (1981) was concerned with ethics and the act, and as a philologist, he was concerned with the dialogic nature of language. In his work, *Discourse in the Novel*, he introduced the notion that language and utterance are based on social interaction, and each person's worldview is inextricably bound to other worldviews. In this sense, Casey (1993) argues that Bakhtin regards all language as essentially social as "each word tastes of the context and contexts in which it has lived in its socially charged life" (pp. 25-26). Stemming from Socratic origins, Bakhtin's idea of discourse is less about persuasion than about testing our own ideas and the ideas of others to further define our individual and cultural identities.

Bakhtin's (1981) theory states that we are shaped by authoritative discourses introduced by our religious circles, families, cultural histories, teachers, governments and other educational institutions. Authoritative discourse, according to Bakhtin, is privileged language that surrounds people. It is a discourse that is given a level of reverence and appears to be fixed, distant and taboo; a discourse we learn to recite, often without question. Such discourse potentially has great power over us in defining our beliefs, or worldviews and identities. However, the hold such discourse has on each individual is contingent on the power it is afforded. If ever challenged or "dethroned" (Bakhtin, p. 424) the discourse becomes powerless.

According to Bakhtin (1981), all utterance is defined through our interactions and no utterance stands alone but is intertwined with past and present interactions and intentions. Through these interactions we filter authoritative discourses and potentially develop new voices and understandings. These new understandings are characterized by

what he refers to as internally persuasive discourse; a discourse which can be likened to retelling a story in one's own words, with unique turns, twists and interpretations. Just as authoritative discourse is filled with the weight of society, internally persuasive discourse is backed by no authority and often not acknowledged by society.

As we begin to challenge authoritative discourses, we then shape ourselves as unique beings capable of challenging the status quo in a process Bakhtin (1981, pp. 424-425) refers to as "human coming-to-consciousness". In this coming to consciousness, a struggle exists between these two types of discourses where one attempts to assimilate new ideas while simultaneously freeing oneself from the authoritative words that have ceased to hold meaning. This struggle occurs when we are faced with conflicting knowledge that challenges our values and previously held *truths*; a struggle in which we are constantly pulled by the authoritative weight of past words, ideas and beliefs while facing new concepts we wish to accept. As we interact with others and the world, the zone of contact increases the opportunities for us to either further solidify past authoritative *truths*, or appoint them diminished authority as alternate interpretations, metaphors, everyday language and experiences are encountered. Engaging in the struggle, even if uncomfortable, is part of a process that can lead to the creation of new voices and understandings. Furthermore, through understanding the power of authoritative discourses, one can begin to unravel the mystery of *self*. By understanding the power of discourse one can see how the essence of an individual identity is a layered composite of *other* voices. The notion of discourse is significant to this research in the sense that it is through interactions that new teachers continuously negotiate their understandings, beliefs and identities. In light of Bakhtin's theory, discourse in social

interactions shapes the ways in which people define themselves as persons and professionals.

If we apply Bakhtin's (1981) theory to the discourses of new teachers, we can then look at the layers of voices, or discourses, woven into the teachers' worlds. To understand the diverse voices that populate these worlds, we might argue that teachers must first engage in a dialogue with them. Once dialogue is initiated, teachers need to sift through those voices and make sense of them in relation to their own understandings and discourses. And as new teachers sift through these voices, their own previously held meanings and understandings may bump up against new ways of knowing as they engage with new authoritative words of university programs, educational policies and procedures as they work with administrators and colleagues. In a struggle to understand and possibly integrate these diverse discourses, they may find themselves grappling for meaning as they are called upon to define their own identities and memberships within the various communities with which they engage. In the words of Buddhist philosopher Thich Nhat Han (in hooks, 2003, p. xiii), "we have to believe that by engaging in dialogue with another person, we have the possibility of making a change within ourselves, that we can become deeper." This possibility of making a change, or one's ability to continuously reshape identity is what Holland et al. (1998) refer to as "improvisation."

2.1.2 Identity and Agency in Cultural/Figured Worlds

Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner and Cain (1998) propose a socio-cultural theory of self-development in which people improvise and find new ways to redefine themselves and recreate their cultural worlds. These authors build on Bakhtin's idea of evolving identities to discuss how improvisation allows us to address self-understandings as an

outcome of living in, through, and around cultural forms practiced in social life. The ability to improvise allows us to create new worlds and the improvisations of our parents and culture become the pivotal point from which to create new improvisations for the self. As a consequence, each generation builds on the improvisations of previous generations in what Holland et al. refer to as “one’s history-in-person” which is the “sediment from past experiences upon which one improvises” (p. 18) using the available cultural resources and positions at present. And like Bakhtin (1981), Holland et al. acknowledge that individuals are caught in the tension between their past histories (that often hold them in a firm grip) and present discourses. For some, the choice has been to challenge authoritative discourses and improvise notions brought forward from their childhood. Holland et al. argue through this internal play, new imagined worlds emerge and possibilities for new communities become evident.

As identities are constantly evolving, one can begin to understand the interplay between a prescribed worldview (more authoritative in nature) and an improvised worldview (where outcomes are constantly being challenged, adapted and redefined). While engaging in a struggle between personal histories and present discourses, Holland et al. (1998) suggest that “persons are malleable, changeable, and subject to discursive powers...” (p. 5). The tension between authoritative and internally persuasive discourse creates an aura of uncertainty as long held beliefs are either confirmed or challenged. It is also through this struggle that improvisation is adopted and human agency emerges.

In their work, Holland et al. (1998) also discuss the notion of figured worlds (worlds that can be referred to as figurative, or dramatized worlds) that are “socially and culturally constructed realm(s) of interpretation” (p. 53) in which persons are likened to

characters, or actors. These worlds are produced, or reproduced through interpretations of everyday events that often unfold as dramas, or narratives that ascribe meaning to personal experiences. However, within this realm of interpretations, it is further noted that particular acts and outcomes are afforded more value than others (for example, conforming to mainstream authoritative discourses may afford one a more valued position in a particular community). As a result, figured worlds provide a context in which social positions and relationships are assigned and enacted and individual identities are created.

In forming new figured worlds, collaboration becomes essential. According to Holland et al. (1998, p. 283), “one can never inhabit a world without at least the figural presence of others, of a social history in person”. Constructing figured worlds requires social interaction with others in tandem with a continuing dialogue of inner speech (much like developing internally persuasive discourse). Like Bakhtin (1981), the authors discuss how, “in the figured world of dialogism the vantage point rests within the ‘I’ and authoring comes from the ‘I’, but the words come from collective experience” (p. 171). Through this interaction and process of creation, identities are formed and situated in social contexts. Holland et al. draw on Bakhtin to refer to this process as “...authoring the self” (p. 173).

Acting within these figured worlds, teachers potentially have the opportunity to challenge the structural positions imposed by authoritative discourses. As a means of challenging these ideas, they can open themselves to accepting and integrating new voices (e.g., community, parent and cultural voices). Then, as new voices are introduced, there exists a potential for the creation of new teaching practices. In this sense, teachers

can author new worlds of knowing and understanding. However, for new teachers entering into the figured world of “the school,” challenging the authoritative systems and discourses may be overshadowed by their overwhelming desire to be accepted as members within the educational “community of practice” (Wenger, 1998).

2.1.3 Communities of Practice

Wenger (1998) comes from a teaching background, with a PhD in artificial intelligence. His work with a social anthropologist Jean Lave (1991) looks at how people come together around some particular area of knowledge or activity to form communities of practice. Within these communities, members engage in practices that reflect mutual engagement in activities (or enterprises) and social interactions. Wenger builds on his previous research with Lave to further explore how communities of practice influence innovation and identity in organizations. This is of interest to my research as it enables me to conceptualize how new teachers negotiate their personal identities through community affiliations over the span of their lifetimes and how they develop new professional identities as they move into educational communities of practice.

For Wenger (1998), issues of identity are an “integral aspect of a social theory of learning and are thus inseparable from issues of practice, community and meaning” (p. 145). Like Holland et al. (1998), he acknowledges the potential to imagine new worlds and to reshape communities noting that identities include our ability, or inability, to shape meanings that define our communities and our sense of belonging within such communities.

Wenger (1998) suggests that our identities are largely determined by our ability to create and negotiate meanings out of our experiences of membership in a variety of

communities. In looking at identity as a social construct, Wenger echoes Bakhtin's (1981) and Holland et al.'s, (1998) notions of dialogue. Through multiple interactions with others and the world, layers of discourse help shape our own unique personal discourses and identities. How we engage in this construction is through our social relationships and community memberships as "we cannot become human by ourselves" (Wenger, p. 146). This social construction of identity is not simply determined by membership, but is influenced by each individual's position and the position of those communities within a broader social structure. This way, we further define ourselves by positions and roles we enact (Holland et al., 1998) in the various communities to which we belong.

For Wenger (1998), our language, artifacts, practices, and worldviews all reflect our social relations. He suggests that even our most personal thoughts make use of ideas, images, and perspectives we internalize through our participation in social relationships. Within a community of practice, participants acknowledge each other as members based on common language and experience. For example, although personal experiences may vary, a common label such as *teacher* suggests membership in an educational community and conversely, participating as a member in an educational community shapes one's identity as "teacher". Or applied to theories presented by Holland et al. (1998), being a teacher means taking on the role of *teacher* and then, giving that role specific meaning by engaging in the practice of teaching. As a result, events while engaging in a community of practice can affect our experience of participation and suddenly bring our personal identity into sharp focus.

According to Wenger (1998), each community of practice is defined by a history of experience. More experienced members (“old timers”) represent this history and serve to disseminate this knowledge to new members (“newcomers”). Of course, not all new members share a common trajectory with existing members and may, in fact, wish to offer new insights, discourses and ways of being within the community of practice. As Wenger notes, this negotiation of meaning has the potential to create rich opportunities for forming new identities (for both the individuals and the community) based on combining the experiential knowledge of the old timers and the fresh insights of the newcomers. However, much like the struggle between authoritative and internally persuasive discourses, this negotiation of ideas and knowledge can create tensions resulting in a repositioning of members, or adjustments of the characteristics defining the community of practice. Furthermore, competence within a community further defines membership and, consequently, further defines one’s identity within that community. This competence, or incompetence, as determined by position within the community, can leave members feeling included or marginalized.

Applied to new teachers, one can imagine that they could experience feelings of incompetence (whether grounded or not) that often leave them hovering around the margins of the community of teachers in which they practice. A strong desire to be accepted into the community could in fact propel novice teachers to improvise practice and, at times, abandon their own beliefs (about themselves or their practice) to adopt the authoritative discourses in place. Working contrary to these dominant voices and authoritative discourses, novice teachers may find themselves further alienated and relegated to the outer margins of the community.

Authoring new figured worlds of knowing and understanding requires a level of awareness regarding one's personal worldviews and beliefs. Such consciousness begins with teachers and community members closely examining and demystifying the authoritative discourses in society. It is through such examination that spaces for agency become more apparent. Freire's (1970) theory explores notions of agency and praxis to propose that through collaboration, creativity, improvisation and action, social change can become possible.

2.1.4 Reflection, Dialogue, Agency and Praxis

Brazilian born Freire (1970; Freire & Macedo, 1998), whose background was in law, philosophy and psychology, is best known in education circles for his examination of the struggle for justice and equity in the Brazilian slums and education system. Today Freire's work is referenced as one of the foundations of critical pedagogy, which informed action (praxis) and dialogue are used as a means of developing understandings that lead to social change. Freire's work on education for social change through reflective practice, questioning, dialogue, collaboration and praxis is of particular importance to my research with new teachers. Links between Freire's banking concept of education and notions of teacher induction are also relevant to my study.

For Freire (1970; Freire & Macedo, 1998), "conscientization", a process of eliminating the influences ascribed by the dominant consciousness, is only the first step toward initiating social and educational change. To play a meaningful part in social reform, Freire argues that one must begin by developing an awareness of personal, communal and moral values governing our relations. By reflecting on practice, understandings of the world, values and beliefs, histories and life narratives, personal

awareness is deepened and the potential for rejecting the oppressive beliefs of the dominant conscience is increased. It is through reflection, he argues, that we might actually begin to examine whether our ideals and our actions coincide or conflict. Without such critical reflection, we simply perpetuate a widening “gap between what we think and the values we affirm and the...acts we perform in our daily lives” (p. 211).

Although Freire (1970) argues for the necessity of engaging in critical reflection, he suggests that in order to initiate change, we must move from a place of simply thinking about ideas to actually putting these ideas into action. As a first step in encouraging ideas to move beyond personal reflection and translate into action, Freire notes that we must be willing to ask questions and engage in collaboration and dialogue. Collaboration and dialogue, according to Freire, act as catalysts for helping people to transform understandings and co-create new visions. However, he states that propelling ideas and visions into action can only truly be achieved through committed and fully engaged involvement. He contends that successful, creative involvement requires that all participants maintain a certain level of mutual respect, empathy and openness to the possibilities and ideas presented by others.

To take an active stance and challenge social constructs that are dehumanizing, oppressive and stagnating in nature, Freire (1970) suggests that educators must creatively inspire those involved to ask questions and take risks (dispositions he maintains are at the root of human existence). The converse, according to Freire, would be a society that is influenced by bureaucratization and lulled into accepting a “pedagogy of answers, which is a pedagogy of adaptation, not a pedagogy of creativity” (p. 227). Such a society is often the result of what Freire refers to as “banking” pedagogy aimed at rewarding

conformity and stimulating oppressive attitudes that lull students into further passivity in order to adapt them to the world.

Freire's (1970; Freire & Macedo, 1998) definition of this passive, banking model of education, in concert with his particular notions of dialogue, reflection and praxis, provide multiple levels of interpretation that can be applied in my own research. These notions suggest the necessity for new teachers to reflect on their own educational and life experiences and engage in dialogue to consider how conformity and oppression might contribute to the formation of their own personal identities and inform their teaching practice. Furthermore, Freire's notions suggest that new teachers ought to engage in critically questioning and examining their own abilities, or inabilities to take action and transform education. In addition, such ideas ask them to identify, and potentially co-create the conditions and practices necessary for initiating social and educational change. Such educational processes pose unique ramifications for newly inducted teachers as they enter into professional knowledge landscapes (Clandinin and Connelly, 1995).

2.1.5 Induction and Professional Knowledge Landscapes

As teacher educators, Clandinin and Connelly (1995), explore the process of induction into teaching by examining the narratives and experiences of teachers as they begin their careers. They propose a framework for studying induction, based on the metaphor of professional knowledge landscapes; which refer to the complex layers of teachers' professional lives. The notion of the landscape suggests a vastness that includes diverse people, events, relationships and philosophies. It is defined as both an "intellectual and moral landscape" (p. 5). Knowledge in this framework includes meanings, beliefs, and understandings that have arisen from life experience and are

expressed in a person's practice. This kind of knowledge is a result of circumstances, choices and actions that have shaped who a person is or is becoming. Practice, therefore, is a component of personal practical knowledge.

In this framework, Clandinin and Connelly (1995) acknowledge the social aspects of the teaching profession. They note that teachers do not work in isolation, nor do they work in settings solely of their own choosing. For example, for many, if not most of the new teachers in my own study, circumstances beyond their control determine whether they will have opportunities to enroll classrooms, and if so, what grades they will teach, and in which school program, or district they will teach.

Noting that teachers spend part of their time in classrooms and part of their time in professional, communal places with people other than their students, Clandinin and Connelly (1995) look at the relationship between the ways teachers live in their classrooms and how they live in other professional places. This "split existence" (p. 5) often creates tensions and epistemological dilemmas for teachers as they navigate between the different spaces of the landscape. Dilemmas unearthed by these authors relate to the professional environment in which teachers are constantly confronted with the conflicting claims of theory and practice. Competitions between theory and practice, are further complicated as theory becomes stripped of its intent and is packaged in teacher's textbooks, curriculum resources and professional development seminars. In this sense, theoretical understanding is reduced to "rhetoric of conclusions" where the authoritative language used by educators becomes neither theoretical, nor practical, "only words cut off from their origins... a discourse of words without human presence" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995, p. 10). This dilemma is further exacerbated when new

teachers enter the profession and try to make sense of the barrage of information funneled into the landscape from what the authors metaphorically refer to as “the conduit”. Once brought into the landscape, the material is afforded a certain weight of authority and has the potential to influence teachers’ practice.

Clandinin and Connelly (1995) acknowledge that the material coming into the landscape carries a moral orientation and an educational expectation as “nothing enters the landscape value-neutral; nothing is there for interest’s sake to be discussed and understood as such” (p. 11). As a result, Clandinin and Connelly caution that the material delivered by the conduit leaves little room for personal histories, diverse identities and critical practice to emerge. For new teachers, additional complexities emerge as they grapple with competing notions delivered by schools, teacher education programs and, more recently, parent conduits, each suggesting its own set of *shoulds*.

Because little room is left for personal histories, diverse identities and critical practices to emerge, Clandinin and Connelly (1995) suggest there are few places on the landscape (and few places within schools and classrooms) for teachers to tell and retell their personal and professional stories, thus few opportunities for personal and professional transformation. They contend that in order for transformation to occur, teachers need safe places in which to engage in conversations with others; places where stories are shared, reflected back, recounted in different ways and relived. This kind of conversation, note Clandinin and Connelly, largely takes place outside of classrooms and schools, that is, public spaces on the landscape where teachers may feel more vulnerable. So, if stories, as expressions of teaching knowledge and experience (or inexperience), are shared in public spaces, teachers are more apt to feel exposed to public scrutiny. As a

result, when sharing stories (which Clandinin & Connelly refer to as cover stories) teachers are often compelled to retell experiences that show them to be competent and expert professionals. In a sense by improvising (as suggested by Holland et al., 1998) and acting as though they are competent experts, they create plausible façades to hide their insecurities and uncertainties. However, as Clandinin and Connelly argue, it is exactly those conversations about struggles and challenges that really need to be shared so that teachers can support each other in initiating transformative practices. For new teachers, clutching newly assigned degrees and teaching certifications, these issues are further exacerbated as they move into the professional knowledge landscape with notions that these documents somehow hold a mythological power suggesting competence. And because there are few safe places to actually drop the veils of false competence, novice teachers often feel further isolated and reluctant to portray themselves as struggling.

2.2 Educational Discourses on Social Justice

Villegas (2007) claims that social justice education is often viewed as an “ambiguous and ideologically loaded term fraught with potential for abuse” (p. 370). Although this may indeed be true, as a means of interpreting and understanding social justice, I will highlight some of the key ideals that have been woven in various theories and ideologies.

The ideals of social justice education have been referred to as: Culturally relevant teaching (Ladson-Billings, 1994); teaching against the grain (Cochran-Smith, 2004); improving the life chances of all children (Shakman, Cochran-Smith, Jong, Terrell, Barnatt, & McQuillan, 2007); teaching for diversity (Zeichner, 1996); multicultural

education (Sleeter & Grant, 2007); antiopressive education (Kumashiro, 2000); and addressing generic issues influenced by privilege and power (Adams, 2000; Harro, 2000). D’Souza, Miller, McQuillan, Scheopner, Gleeson, and Cochran-Smith (2007) and Shakman et al. note that, although social justice education has been defined in various ways, the most widely held definitions share commonalities in an “explicit recognition of the marked disparities in educational opportunities, resources, achievement, and long-term outcomes among minority and low-income pupil groups and their white, middle-class peers” (Shakman et al., p. 7).

For Adams (2000), social justice can be understood as issues (such as ethnocentrism/ethnic prejudice, racism, sexism, heterosexism, ableism, ageism, classism, xenophobia, religious prejudice, etc.) of “domination and subordination ” (p. 2). Embedded in a discussion around this definition is the notion of privilege and power defined by one’s social identity, an identity that assigns one a dominant or subordinate social position (Allard & Santoro, 2004; Applebaum, 2001; Harro, 2000). In teasing out these understandings, Adams (p. 7) discusses two complimentary meanings for the term social diversity,

[1] different experiences, perspective, worldviews, modes of communication and behaviour, and belief systems and values that we all earn as we are socialized within our different social groupings.... [2] ...social groups that are unequal as well as different – groups that are not equally valued, but rather are classifications or categories of persons that occupy different places in a social hierarchy.

She goes on to note that according to the second set of meanings social diversity offers us an opportunity to build connections among different groups to not only enhance

understanding, but also to eliminate prejudice, inequality, discrimination and oppression of one group by another.

Like Adams (2000), other researchers (Harro, 2000; Kumashiro, 2000; Kumashiro, Baber, Richardson, Ricker-Wilson & Wong, 2004; Pincus, 2000; Young, 2000) contend that understandings of social justice are tightly braided with the notion of oppression. In this understanding, people have unequal opportunities so that the needs and interests of some are valued while the needs of others are devalued. According to Harro (2000), our social identities “predispose us to unequal *roles* in the dynamic system of oppression.” (p. 15). For these researchers, education and schooling can be either sites for liberation (Freire, 1970) where inequities are dismantled, oppression is interrupted and discrimination challenged, or they can be sites for perpetuating acts of oppression and injustice.

Sleeter and Grant (2007, p. 184) propose “multicultural social justice education” as a possibility for shaping social justice education. Rooted in social reconstructionism echoing ideas proposed by Kumashiro (2000) and Kumashiro et al. (2004), Sleeter and Grant suggest that multicultural social justice education focuses on the elimination of oppression of one group by another. These educational researchers view multicultural social justice education as a politically guided practice that not only addresses equal opportunity, but aims for “equal results” (pp. 185-186) for diverse communities. This approach, Sleeter and Grant argue, “prepares future citizens to reconstruct society so that it better serves the interests of all groups of people, especially those who are of color, poor, female, gay, lesbian, transsexual, disabled, or any combination of these” (pp. 185-186).

Shakman et al. (2007), and D'Souza et al. (2007) argue that preparing teachers to teach for social justice needs to be rooted in “enhancing children’s learning and their life chances by challenging the inequities of school and society” (p. 7). Cook-Slather and Youens (2007) agree that central to any definition of social justice education is the understanding all students not only have the right to learn, but have the right to shape how their education is conceptualized.

D'Souza et al. (2007) further contend that the notion of teacher quality needs to be reconstructed to represent more appropriately the goal of sustaining a healthy democratic, diverse society. They argue that a healthy democratic society is one that focuses on enhancing children’s learning and, when children fail to learn, an injustice is committed whereby “their life chances are diminished and democracy weakens” (p. 3). Accompanying this is the view that teachers have the potential to be “both educators and activists committed the democratic ideal” (Shakman et al., 2007, p. 7). However, according to D'Souza et al. (2007) and Shakman et al., the notion that teachers should be prepared for teaching social justice is widely critiqued by parties both within, and outside of teacher education. According to these researchers, the most popular criticisms include: (a) vagueness surrounding definitions of social justice; (b) lack of attention to underlying assumptions and historical traditions; (c) its “touchy-feely” focus on teachers being “nice” to pupils, on building self-esteem and cultural identity without teaching skills and knowledge necessary for performing well on tests and joining the workforce; and (d) promoting “progressive political activism and other actions fraught with contested ideological significance” (p. 8). Although complicated, the discourses on social justice education have stimulated critical dialogue about the implications for teaching in today’s

diverse and ever-changing societies. Moreover, the predominantly American discourse has become a springboard for critical dialogue about social justice education in Canada and other international settings.

2.2.1 A Canadian/British Columbian Context and Perspective

In the past several years, a similar discourse about democracy and citizenship has emerged in the province of British Columbia (BC). The BC discussion began with the view that social responsibility education in democratic countries, specifically Canada and the United States, should be focused on concerns of citizenship, which is defined in participatory and activist terms (Branson, 1998; Jeroski et al., 2001; Sears et al., 1998). However, Bognar et al. (1997) and Sears et al. argued that in recent years, citizenship and social responsibility was more often the “subject of official rhetoric than the focus of systemic educational efforts” (Sears, et al, 1998, p. 5). Cogan and Kubow (1997) contended that, as a result, schools were no longer explicitly addressing their obligation to prepare socially responsible citizens and social responsibility had not been given precedence within school curricula.

To address this, Branson (1998) examined current practices, curriculum and programs, to conclude that they are marked by an “absence of clear benchmarks and performance standards for critical aspects of citizenship and social responsibility” (in Jeroski et al., 2001, p. 5). In response to these outcomes and in collaboration with selected teachers, administrators and students, the Government of British Columbia (2001) determined a set of clear standards to provide “a framework that schools and families could use to focus and monitor their effort to enhance social responsibility among students and to improve the social climates of their schools” (p. 1). As Jeroski et

al. explained, “clear standards contribute not only to achievement, but also to self esteem and motivations [as] students who understand what is expected are more likely to feel ownership over their own progress” (p. 4). In essence, the standards presented as a “framework of expectations” were in reality standards for assessing student achievement.

As a result, accountability and student achievement became the driving force behind a movement to create performance standards to measure pupils’ ability to contribute to the class and school community, solve problems peacefully, value diversity and defend human rights, and democratic rights and responsibilities (Government of British Columbia, 2001). To *ensure* accountability, students were rated in each area as “not yet within expectations; meets expectations (minimal level); fully meets expectations; or exceeds expectations” (Government of British Columbia, 2001).

Interestingly enough, as a classroom teacher in BC at this time, I recall simply receiving this draft document outlining the standards for assessment with no dialogue, professional development, or curriculum to accompany it (aside from some sample activities with supplementary student work samples to help teachers in their evaluations). Clearly, the analogy, “putting the cart before the horse” applies to this oversight. As a result, publishing companies filled the gap by producing volumes of *teacher friendly* materials to fill the gap. And nary a critical eye was cast on these materials, at the time, as they were taken to be *quality* curriculum. Rarely were critical questions asked about why we were assessing students’ social responsibility and whose standards and values these standards represented (Philpott, 2003). It should be noted, however, that since its inception, the document has included disclaimers that identify the standards as a “framework for social responsibility [that] reflects broadly accepted values. Appropriate

ways of demonstrating these qualities may vary from one cultural context to another” (Government of British Columbia, 2001).³

What makes this discourse so compelling is, that like the quality teacher debate pervasive in the US, the BC social responsibility discourse has also been driven by an assessment and accountability agenda (D’Souza et al., 2007; Shakman et al., 2007) rather than a social justice agenda. In response to a need to develop socially responsible citizens, the BC government proposed that in using the performance standards as a guide, schools begin constructing and implementing measurable school plans to address these issues. Therefore, in schools citing social responsibility as part of the school action plan, administrators were (and continue to be) expected to produce evidence and results that demonstrated students’ social responsibility had indeed increased. Consequently, to generate results, teachers were requested to assess their students’ abilities in the four areas defined by the standards. And, in my experience, those schools “failing to meet the social responsibility grade” were subject to public opinion and criticism targeting them as problematic.

Interestingly, social responsibility has often been conflated with social justice, and responsibility with activism. Social responsibility appears to be broad in scope, encompassing responsibility/accountability to not only people, but also to the environment. It is generally expressed in terms of “community-mindedness” and “tolerance and respect for the ideas and beliefs of others” (Government of British

³ In September 2007 a new BC Ministry of Education draft curriculum document *Social Justice 12 – Integrated Resource Package*, has been introduced as a Grade 12 elective subject (Government of British Columbia, 2007). This document addresses social justice issues and is a separate document to the Social Responsibility Standards introduced in 2000. At the time of my research, participants were unaware of the Social Justice 12 document. As of September 2008, implementation of this course/curriculum is at the discretion of individual school boards in BC.

Columbia, 2001). On the other hand, social justice (generally expressed in terms of social issues such as racism, ageism, sexism and classism), appears to be defined by resisting complacency and taking a stand against individual, structural and systemic injustice and oppression. Although both social justice and social responsibility suggest that one take responsibility for working toward diminishing/eliminating injustices in society, social responsibility as it is enacted in BC is more of a *soft approach*, or “touchy-feely” (Shakman et al., 2007) approach that has been translated into one-day multicultural fairs and monthly assemblies commending virtuous acts. An approach, argue Canadian researchers Schick and St. Denis (2005), that perpetuates “a mythology of racelessness and stupefying innocence [based on the] construction of an egalitarian, not racist [Canadian] national self-image” (p. 308).

Although I do not support the use of the social responsibility performance standards, as articulated above, it is important to include a discussion of this framework in my research as it highlights the complexities of social justice enacted and implemented in a BC educational context and it corresponds to one of the types of discourse on the topic of social justice that emerged from an analysis of what participants in this study had to say about the topic during the research interviews. This discussion becomes significant to teacher education and new teacher experiences in BC, as there appear to be many interpretations of social justice that weave in and out of programs and policies at the school, university, and ministry levels. These include developing a sense of community-mindedness, adopting a multiculturalism approach, embracing curriculum centred around virtuous acts, taking an active stance to end individual and systemic oppression, working toward a more just society by acting as agents of social change, deconstructing privileged

positions, practicing an ethic of care, practicing equality and human rights, improving life chance of all children, etc. And even if social justice is understood as taking an active, critical stance toward dismantling inequities and improving life chances of children, DeSouza et al. (2007) and Shakman et al. (2007) suggest that those preservice teachers participating in programs focused on social justice will eventually enter schools during practicums, or as certified teachers, in which they will bump up against varied and controversial discourses of social justice and social responsibility. In an attempt to fit in, or survive this immersion, they may abandon notions of social justice as activism in favour of adopting the *soft approach* celebrated by the status quo. Conversely, they may in fact, be relieved to abandon the perspectives on social justice presented in their teacher education programs. Either way, they are faced with choices about maintaining or shifting current educational discourses and actions regarding social justice.

2.2.2 Teacher Education Research

According to Hollins and Guzman (2005) and Sleeter (2001), many of the studies examining how teachers were prepared for teaching diverse students are qualitative and conducted within the context of university and college teacher education courses and field experiences. The majority of these studies examined preservice teachers' attitudes and beliefs about diversity and teaching diverse students as they entered into programs. However, most did not look at how these attitudes and beliefs influenced later teaching practice, or how they impacted the learning of diverse pupils (Hollins & Guzman, 2005; Shakman et al., 2007; Sleeter, 2001). Some studies, nevertheless, did follow preservice teachers into field, or immersion experiences, to examine how their attitudes and beliefs influenced their practice (Allard & Santoro, 2006; Cochran-Smith 2004; Hollins &

Guzman, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Sleeter, 2001; Wiest, 1998). More recently, to examine how beliefs and attitudes influenced practice over time, some longitudinal studies followed preservice teachers through their final years in teacher education programs and into the first years of their careers as certified teachers (Causey et al., 2000; Cross, 2003; D'Souza et al., 2007; Johnson, 2002; Kubler-LaBoskey, 2006; Shakman et al., 2007).

In many instances, studies did not show how preservice teachers' predispositions were related to the admission and selection processes used to identify applicants' potential for learning to teach diverse students (Hollins & Guzman, 2005). Hollins and Guzman note that although educational researchers have collected data about preservice teachers' attitudes and beliefs, it is challenging to determine how generally applicable this data is and it is equally challenging to determine whether coursework and field experiences had an effect on attitudes and beliefs, or benefited teacher growth and development over time.

In a review on teacher education research, Sleeter (2001) noted that the bulk of these studies examined how White preservice teachers developed awareness, insights and skills for effective teaching in multicultural contexts. However, she suggested that because cohorts and programs were defined by predominantly White preservice teachers, those preservice teachers of colour often found themselves isolated or misunderstood. She added, however, that some researchers, such as Ladson-Billings (1994; 2001), have examined such issues with great insight. Hollins and Guzman (2005) claimed that research examining the experiences and retention of preservice teachers of colour, indicate that teacher education programs can be enhanced by a cohort model and program

placements where these candidates feel valued for the knowledge, experience and commitment they brought to such programs.

In her examination of the literature, Sleeter (2001) contended that research to date on preparing teachers was very “piecemeal, predominated by small-scale action research...that produce[d] a disjointed and somewhat repetitious knowledge base” (p. 201). Hollins and Guzman (2005) concurred that most of the studies they reviewed were conducted by teacher educators themselves who engaged in self-study, or practitioner inquiry, using their own professional programs and projects as sites for inquiry. The good news, they offered, is that at least this type of inquiry is a positive example of how teacher educators value investigating their practice in terms of preparing preservice teachers for teaching diverse students.

Furthermore, Hollins and Guzman (2005) argued that studies conducted in individual courses do not provide strong empirical evidence that can be generalized across programs. As well, many of the qualitative studies conducted in single courses or field experiences failed to be situated adequately within the context of teacher education programs, making it difficult to distinguish the effects of coursework or field experiences from other elements of teacher education programs. Moreover, they expressed a concern that many qualitative studies provide little information about the school site, the social context, and culture of schools and classrooms in which preservice teachers completed practicums. Furthermore, the majority of quantitative studies employed questionnaires or surveys administered at only one point in time limiting information on growth or change. Moreover, some studies on evaluating programs that utilized self-reported data raise questions about whether samples are representative, or whether answers provided by

participants are valid (as often they were influenced by a desire to seem politically correct, or in alignment with the beliefs of their instructors). As a result, Cochran-Smith and Zeichner (2005), Hollins and Guzman (2005), and Sleeter (2001) asserted that these research gaps limit our understanding of how to better program for, and prepare preservice teachers to teach diverse student populations.

In addition to all the recommendations cited above, Cochran-Smith and Zeichner (2005) recommended that researchers develop research designs that attend to methodological issues identified in teacher education research. Although they listed many concerns, I focus primarily on topics and methodological issues that are relevant to my study. Methodological issues these authors highlighted are: (a) studies need to provide a more detailed description of data collection, analysis methods and research contexts; (b) research needs to be situated in relevant theoretical frameworks regarding teacher learning and teaching practice, and; (c) the multiple roles of the researcher need to be highlighted and made clear.

2.2.3 Building on Previous Research

In my previous study titled *Pause to Reflect: Exploring Teachers' Notions of Social Responsibility* (Philpott, 2002; Philpott & Beynon, 2005), I interviewed 11 practicing teachers, at various stages of their careers, about their understandings of what it means to be socially responsible. Data gathered in that qualitative study revealed that for these practicing teachers, teacher education programs at various universities have very little influence in determining their understandings of social responsibility and have not prepared them well for teaching diverse populations. In that study, I drew on the work of sociocultural theorists (Holland, 1998; Bakhtin, 1981), pedagogical theorist, Freire, 1970

and critical multicultural educators (Delpit, 1995; Dei, 1996; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 2001; Sleeter, 1993). I assumed that we must begin to address social responsibility by reflecting on our personal understandings, practices and roles. In the previous study, I argued that to prepare new teachers for educating in diverse classrooms, we must rethink our teacher education programs to expand levels of awareness and encouraged reflection, dialogue and critical thinking skills around issues of social responsibility for practicing and potential educators alike (Philpott, 2002; Philpott & Beynon, 2005). To be responsive to these critiques, in this doctoral study, I explore how new teachers construct their understandings of social justice education, and how these understandings evolve in their practice as they enter into the teaching profession.

2.3 Pedagogical and Philosophical Perspectives

According to education researchers (Casey, 1993; hooks, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Thiessen et al., 1996) and professional educators (Elliot in Medwick, 2000; Paley, 1989, 1995), teachers acting as agents of social change are characterized not so much by their pedagogy or commitment to the profession as by the intentions and circumstances that drive their practices and broaden their perspectives. As hooks (2003, p.76) argues, “if we want change, we must be willing to teach”.

Consciously acting as agents of social change within educational communities of practice, teachers are compelled to step outside of the status quo (and possibly the comfort of their professional communities) to initiate new practices. Ladson-Billings (1994) notes that these teachers find the courage and confidence to break rank to deliver curriculum experiences that meet the needs of the children even if it means going against mainstream educational protocol. In doing this, they often work *against the grain*

(Cochran-Smith, 2004), trusting their own educational beliefs and finding strength and support by creating bonds with like-minded teachers. These teachers create a sense of community that honours diverse identities and empowers the children they teach by making connections and collaborating with others. hooks (2003) hopes that this will thus enable teachers to transition from authoritarian ways of being to more collaborative ways of working in partnership to initiate change.

According to Casey (1993), teachers as agents of social change truly view themselves as part of movement toward transforming education by living their lives consciously and passionately to interrupt the cycle of oppression and conformity. However, in today's frenetic world of education where new teachers struggle with myriad authoritative discourses about standards, accountability and curriculum, one might wonder how such conscious and passionate teachers might develop.

2.3.1 Evolving Personal Identities: I Teach Who I am

Our biases, worldviews, values, and beliefs ultimately impact/influence our teaching practice. As Delpit (1988) advises, "we do not really see through our eyes or hear through our ears, but through our beliefs" (p. 280). Coville-Hall et al. (1995) and Wiest (1998) propose that what we say, perceive, believe and think can disable or empower our students. It is for this reason that numerous educational researchers insist it is imperative to increase personal self-awareness in relating to race, culture, ethnicity, class, ability, gender, and sexual orientation (Dei, 1996; Cochran-Smith, 2004; Haberman, 1991, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Sleeter, 1995, 2001; Sleeter & Grant, 2007; Zeichner, 1996, 2003). Then, as we become aware of our views, we observe how we filter our instruction and assessment of others (parents, teachers and children) through

our individual and collective cultural lenses (Delpit, 1995; Kagan, 1992; Sleeter, 1993; Sleeter & Grant, 2007).

From a pedagogical perspective, Palmer (1998) suggests that “we teach who we are [and that] teaching, like any truly human activity, emerges from one’s inwardness” (pp. 1-2). This implies a certain level of understanding of personal beliefs and reflection (Causey et al., 2000; Garmon, 2004) on how those beliefs inform our actions and pedagogy (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005). As Dei (1996) suggests, we can address questions of social justice “by first understanding ourselves and how we see our social obligations and responsibilities” (p. 132). For Sleeter (1993, 2001), Delpit (1995), Cochran-Smith (2004) and hooks (1994), these selves are understood as classed, raced, gendered, and abled subjects. Oakeshott (1989) suggests that we construct meaning of our lives by responding to the circumstances we encounter. This *meaning* is based on our own personal histories, social identifications and understandings (Adams et al, 2000; Allard & Santoro, 2006; Causey et al., 2000; Cochran-Smith, 2004; Cross, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Schick & St. Denis, 2005; Tatum, 2000). These pedagogical perspectives converge in highlighting the need for preservice and practicing teachers, as well as teacher educators, who better understand the sources and trajectories of their own discourses and identities and can recognize how these contribute to their teaching practice.

Several scholars (Cross, 2005; Schick & St. Denis, 2005; Sleeter, 1993 & 2001; Sleeter & Grant, 2007) acknowledge the discrepancy between teachers (historically predominantly White middle class women) and the students they teach (often predominantly ethnically and culturally diverse especially in urban settings), reiterating

the necessity for teacher self-examination. To address this, Cross calls for both pre-service and practicing teachers and teacher educators to “rethink ourselves, what we believe, our relationships with others, and our relationships to the very systems that privilege us” (p. 273).

2.3.2 Evolving Social Identities

Drawing from feminist poststructuralist theorists (Weedon, 1999; Davies, 2000; Reay 1998, in Allard & Santoro 2004), as well as Holland et al. (1998) and Bakhtin (1981), Allard and Santoro (2004; 2006) argue that how we see and locate ourselves within various discourses (e.g., the discourse of difference) depends on the experiences, contexts and discourses we are being offered. They also note that, within Western culture in the 21st century, discussions about shaping one’s self, or building one’s identity are based on a perspective that values the development of the individual. They contend that this preoccupation with “becoming an individual” (p. 5) denies the collective experiences that inform our identities. As with Bakhtin and Holland et al., Allard and Santoro argue that identities are socially constructed and continuously influenced by interactions among individuals and groups.

Applied to teacher identity, Allard and Santoro (2004) contend that because most preservice teachers are located within dominant (most often White middle class) culture, they have a secure sense of belonging and understand themselves as normative—an understanding that implies people outside that group are somehow abnormal. Because they *fit in*, they often find it difficult to step outside of the centre and see how such collective experiences operate on the margins. The emphasis on freely choosing individualism, or a focus on becoming unique individuals, argue Allard and Santoro,

deflects the attention of those in mainstream power positions from examining larger more subversive notions of difference embedded in oppressive experiences of ethnicity, race, class, and gender between and among groups.

Harro (2000), like Allard and Santoro (2004), argues that we are each “born into a specific set of *social identities*, related to the categories of difference [gender, ethnicity, class, language, age, ability, religion and sexual orientation]... and [that] these social identities predispose us to unequal *roles* in the dynamic system of oppression” (Harro, 2000, p. 15). Through the course of our lifetime, each of us is socialized, through family, institutional and cultural affiliations, on “how to be” (Harro, p. 15). Harro also contends that people coming from privileged positions are unaware of the impact of these “accepted” assumptions, rules and roles (particularly if those rules, roles and assumptions serve them well). He notes also that most people choose to conform to the conventional ascribed rules, roles and assumptions and opt to be rewarded for being “normal” rather than contradict the established social structure and risk being ostracized, or marginalized. So by consciously, or unconsciously, turning a blind eye to these socializing processes, those in dominant/privileged groups perpetuate the cycle of oppression.

Thus, while personal reflection is an important aspect of teacher development and agency, researchers (Allard & Santoro, 2004; Harro, 2000) caution that simply approaching difference through examining one’s own assumptions is not enough. Preservice and practicing teachers, along with teacher educators, must also understand the systemic and far-reaching collective patterns of difference and be encouraged to carefully examine their social locations and identifications. Harro (2000) further argues that they must be encouraged to form coalitions with those who are different from them

to challenge beliefs, stereotypes, assumptions and discrimination to take a stand and interrupt the cycle of socialization. It is then, he contends that “we begin to question the givens, the assumptions of the society, the norms, the values, the rules, the roles, and even the structures” (pp. 20-21).

2.3.3 Moral Agency and Social Location

Adopting a philosophical perspective, Applebaum (2001) asserts that moral agency must be understood critically, through the lens of our social location: “people are multiply located with identity markers that are fluid and context dependent” (pp. 412-413). She notes, furthermore, that some of these markers are of more importance than others. Although she acknowledges the power of aligning with social groups (Boyd, 1997) to which we have been assigned, often by virtue of birth, she cautions us not to accept passively or blindly the attitudes and norms associated with such groups. This, she argues, simply perpetuates a complacent image that change is impossible and fosters a resigned attitude. Rather than accept this complacency, she contends that group members have the creative capacity to shift their affiliations within groups. Although she claims that we are born into specific groups by circumstance of birth or by virtue of our physical attributes, sustaining affiliations with these groups depends on whether we choose to enact the socialized norms expected by members within the groups.

To highlight this creative capacity/capability, Applebaum (2002) draws on Bailey’s (1998) metaphor of “performative scripts” (cited in Applebaum, p. 416) to explain moral agency. The scripts, much like Holland’s (1998) notion of figured worlds, are tied to norms, beliefs and meanings that affect how we understand ourselves and others.

For Applebaum (2002), the enactment of moral agency suggests actively resisting scripts that perpetuate dominant group attitudes and beliefs, which reinforce social injustices and inequities. Therefore, locating oneself does not imply that one is inevitably locked within a particular perspective. Rather, Applebaum argues that to locate oneself is to acknowledge subtle roles that “well-intentioned, morally concerned dominant group members play in sustaining cultural domination and oppression” (p. 417). Resisting scripts requires creative attitudes where, in first locating themselves, dominant group members can choose to *authentically* collaborate with those in different social locations, particularly those who are oppressed, to widen their perspectives and beliefs. Applebaum notes that authentic collaboration would require dominant group members to decentre their privileged positions by shifting the focus from themselves to make space for those on the margins to come forward. Applebaum cautions that in enacting creative shifts, we must always remain skeptical of our own good intentions and motivations so as to prevent these from obscuring our abilities to listen deeply to the messages conveyed by others.

Rice (2002) expands on Applebaum’s (2002) discussion by suggesting that moral agency is contingent on our situated perceptions that are filtered through lenses of culture, class, race, gender and ethnicity. She argues that because perceptions *influence* rather than *determine* our beliefs and understandings, we have the potential to change those beliefs and understandings by altering our perceptions. This change, she claims, can be achieved by: examining how long-held beliefs and perceptions have been socialized by group membership; engaging with differing (and at times unsettling) perspectives and; exploring broader views of “the moral, where choice and action are perceived as real

possibilities” (p. 368). For both Applebaum and Rice, beliefs and perceptions, although situated, are not immutable, thus allowing space for the emergence of new possibilities for moral agency.

In the same vein, Levinson (1999) argues that one’s racial, sexual, gender, or class identity does not necessarily determine one’s moral outlook. However the process of coming into consciousness about one’s identity will affect one’s perceptions of moral possibilities available at any particular moment. She maintains that people would be more likely to fight against injustices if they were aware of the moral choices available to them, given their personal positions and socially defined locations. She argues that what stands in the way of this happening is that we are generally more familiar with the ways in which our particular identities limit us than we are of the potential possibilities for developing relationships across differences. For Levinson, developing a moral identity does not mean transcending one’s particular racial identity. Rather, it requires that each of us accept the responsibilities that result from our individual racial particularity. Although this process of developing a moral identity is not always a “morally straightforward” (p. 4) process, like Allard and Santoro (2004), she recommends that preservice teachers begin by closely interrogating their personal positions and socially defined locations. From there, preservice teachers can begin to notice how their positions and locations enable them to either encourage, or resist change.

Several researchers assert that shifting perspectives requires first an awareness of beliefs, particularly as they are related to social locations and privileged positions (Allard & Santoro, 2004; Applebaum, 2001; Harro, 2000; Levinson, 1999; Rice, 2002). Then, to truly initiate moral agency, each of us must demonstrate a willingness to finding creative

ways to decentre our privileged positions and perspectives, thus making space for alternate perspectives and beliefs to emerge. They suggest that it is imperative that we learn to nurture a different relationship with others who challenge our beliefs and thus invoke uncomfortable feelings in us.

2.3.4 Teacher Education: Unsettling Preservice Teacher Beliefs

How difficult is it for preservice teachers to change beliefs, perspectives and discourses that are so closely linked with how they define themselves as individuals and group members? According to researchers (Brown, 2004; Causey et al., 2000; Darling-Hammond; 2000; Kagan, 1992; Levine-Rasky, 2001), although not impossible, it is challenging for people to change understandings and attitudes that they have acquired through socialization. One suggestion Darling-Hammond offers is to intervene while preservice teachers are enrolled in teacher education programs,

Those teachers who have not received powerful teacher education interventions often maintain a single cognitive and cultural perspective that makes it difficult for them to understand the experiences, perceptions, and knowledge bases that deeply influence the approaches to learning of students who are different from themselves. The capacity to understand another is not innate; it is developed through study, reflection, guided experience, and inquiry. (p. 171)

Levine-Rasky (2001) asserts that while it is the hope of teacher education to encourage new teachers to become agents of change, the reality is that many do not possess the dispositions, knowledge, or desire necessary for making this happen. She does not, however, infer that these attributes need herald the fate of all preservice teachers or teacher education programs. Rather, to address these issues, she outlines three signposts

(dispositions) that help identify the potentiality of a preservice candidate in becoming a “social reconstructionist educator” (p. 291).

The first signpost indicates that a prospective teacher must personally identify with educational inequality and injustice. In identifying with inequities, she must also have internalized a strong desire for change by not conforming to traditional teaching methods and connecting with the lives of the children she teaches. The second signpost indicates that a prospective teacher must value critical pedagogy (also suggested by hooks, 2003 and Sleeter, 1995) aimed at changing unjust power distributions in society. The third signpost proposes that a prospective teacher demonstrate a strong desire to learn more about the effects of educational inequality including the effects of social domination and institutional racism. A willingness to explore tensions, asserts Levine-Rasky (2001), denotes candidates most likely to become agents of social change.

Causey et al. (2000) suggest a key factor influencing preservice teachers’ attitudes about diversity is the tenacity with which they cling to prior knowledge and understandings about others who are different from them. They propose that challenge is exacerbated when acknowledging different beliefs and attitudes requires preservice teachers to examine their own privileged social positions. This is difficult because many preservice teachers have never been asked to examine how they are located within dominant cultural perspectives and, as a result, they lack experiences to draw on to confirm or redefine their interpretations. Like Bakhtin (1981) and Holland et al. (1998), Causey et al. argue that a necessary condition for change, or “cognitive restructuring” (p. 19) is the recognition of the dissonance between previous discourses and beliefs and new discourses and beliefs. For Causey et al., the more open a preservice teacher is to

embracing dissonance as a necessary disposition for change, the more likely she will be able to engage in critical examination of the moral and ethical implications and consequences of teaching and the more likely she will be able to sustain these attitudes and beliefs through the course of her career.

Kagan (1992) argues that teachers' beliefs are shaped by their personal experiences with learning and teaching. And those experiences, he notes, are filtered through their previously held beliefs, translated and absorbed into their unique pedagogies. He contends that to teach an individual something new requires effecting a conceptual change in beliefs. And because beliefs act as filters and foundations of new knowledge, beliefs that are congruent with new knowledge facilitate change, whereas beliefs that are inconsistent with new knowledge impede change. To help promote conceptual change, Kagan suggests that preservice teachers must first make explicit their implicit beliefs and assumptions. Following this, they need to confront the inadequacy or inconsistency of their beliefs and then they must engage in opportunities that enable them to integrate and differentiate between previous and new knowledge.

Unfortunately, research indicates that not only do many preservice teachers enter and exit education courses and programs on diversity unchanged, they often find their preexisting stereotypes and beliefs reinforced by the experience (Banks, 2001; Brown, 2004; Causey et al., 2000; Kagan, 1992). According to these researchers, programs cannot change preservice teachers' behaviours without effecting change in their beliefs. To address this, they, along with others, (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Delpit, 1995; Dei, 1996; Palmer, 1998; Sleeter & Grant, 2007) underscore that programs must provide preservice

teachers with opportunities to examine and evaluate their beliefs, raise their cross-cultural awareness and sensitivity toward difference and develop a commitment to social justice.

Applying Harro's (2000) concepts for change in teacher development to teacher education programs, it seems apparent that preservice teachers must be encouraged to learn to work collaboratively with those who are like them and those who are different from them. This enables them to explore new possibilities for breaking oppressive cycles of socialization that ultimately affect everyone, including the children they will teach.

2.3.5 New Teacher Induction and Mentorship

Wang, Odell and Schwille (2008) reviewed current literature focused on the effects of induction on beginning teachers' conceptions and practice of teaching. Their findings indicate that many variables determine how new teachers developed professionally in their first years of practice. Focusing on connections between teacher preparation programs and beginning practice, Wang et al. note that when beginning their careers, new teachers discover that pedagogy introduced in teacher preparation programs is not always consistent with, or supported by, their existing school cultures. Consequently, these researchers contend that new teachers often make adjustments in an attempt to fit in to school cultures and abandon their preservice understandings. Unfortunately, note Wang et al., adjusting pedagogy or philosophies does not necessarily translate into more effective teaching. Moreover, they note that not all structured mentoring relationships necessarily support "reform-minded" teaching practices, and that the quality of mentorship depends largely on the mentor's own dispositions and practices. Furthermore, effects of mentoring programs are limited by how beginning teachers respond and the mentoring contexts in which relationships are situated. Interestingly,

none of the studies they identify actually examine mentorship programs to see if discourses introduced were significant in affecting new teachers' beliefs and practice.

Wang et al. (2008) maintain that purposeful collaboration is a key factor in new teacher mentorship and induction. They note that, in a Canadian study (Rolheisder & Hundey, 1995 in Wang et al. 2008), preservice teachers who developed strong dispositions toward collaboration in their teacher preparation programs tended to maintain a collaborative spirit with colleagues who shared similar visions and ideas once they began their teaching careers. They claim that collaboration can be developed beyond mentorship programs through identifying like-minded colleagues, or through job-sharing situations where colleagues share similar visions of teaching practice and student learning.

To gather insight into new teacher induction experiences, Kardos and Johnson (2007) explore the collegial experiences of 486 new teachers in their first and second year of teaching. Their findings indicate that new teachers are more likely to stay in teaching if they perceive their schools as worksites that promote: frequent interactions among staff members of all experience levels; recognition of new teachers' as beginners and; teachers sharing the responsibility for the school and its students. Kardos and Johnson refer to such schools as "*integrated professional cultures*" (p. 1).

Unlike many mentorship programs that might loosely pair up volunteer mentors with new teachers, integrated professional cultures are worksites where new teachers interact with experienced colleagues in a purposeful, ongoing reciprocal way. Supporting the notion of collaboration recommended by Wang et al. (2008), teachers in these schools share a sense of collective commitment and responsibility for the school, the students and

each other. As a result, as a community of practice (Wenger, 1998), these schools view new teachers as valued members of the school culture and community. In these reciprocal communities of practice, or integrated professional cultures, veteran teachers provide new teachers with supported opportunities to improve their practice, and new teachers are encouraged to contribute their unique talents and skills. As a result, these new teachers are inducted into a professional culture that advocates direct, positive, supportive growth and development.

2.4 Chapter Summary

In the first sections of this chapter, I outlined four key theoretical constructs framing my study (Bakhtin, 1981; Clandinin & Connelly, 1995; Holland et al., 1998; Wenger, 1998). The sociocultural theories presented by Bakhtin (1981) and Holland et al. (1998) articulate how identities and understandings are formed through dialogue and interactions with others and with the world. According to this perspective, it is through interactions that we are presented with opportunities, which challenge previous authoritative discourses and lead us to create internally persuasive discourses (Bakhtin), or imagine new figured worlds (Holland et al.). In the context of my study, these theoretical constructs are used to examine new teachers' perceptions and understandings as they explore their own identities in the context of social justice education. Connected to these sociocultural theories, Wenger's (1998) theory of communities of practice suggest that we negotiate the meaning out of our experiences through interactions and membership in communities that ultimately have a hand in shaping our identities. Notions of agency and praxis introduced by Freire (1970; 1998) suggest how social change is possible through reflective, critical practice and dialogue. Freire argued that to

truly initiate change, educators needed to engage and inspire students to take an active stance toward dismantling oppressive social constructs and practices. Finally, aspects of Clandinin's and Connelly's (1995) theory on professional knowledge landscapes indicated that without adequate support new teachers often became isolated and overwhelmed while being inducted into the profession.

In the second part of this chapter, I began by outlining various discourses on social justice and examining educational discourses on social justice education presented by researchers (Adams, 2000; Kumashiro, 2000; Cochran-Smith, 1991; D'Souza et al., 2007; Harro, 2000; Shakman et al., 2007; Sleeter & Grant, 2007; Zeichner, 1993). I also presented a Canadian perspective specific to social responsibility prevalent in schools in BC (Government of British Columbia, 2001). Following this, I explored pedagogical and philosophical perspectives that frame social justice and teacher education. I reviewed researchers' (Casey, 1993; hooks, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Thiessen et al., 1996) interpretations of what it means to teach for social justice or act as an agent for change. This is understood as working together to interrupt the cycle of oppression and conformity. I explored arguments that beliefs, values and worldviews impact teaching practice (Delpit, 1995, 1988; Greene, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Palmer, 1998; Schick & St. Denis, 2005; Sleeter, 1993). Following this, I discussed researchers' (Allard & Santoro, 2004; Harro, 2000) proposals that our prescribed social identities influence how we perceive ourselves in relation to others. I showed how they contended that teachers be given opportunities to examine the implications of their privileged positions/social locations. Building on these notions of social locations and identity, I drew on philosophical perspectives (Applebaum, 2001; Levinson, 1999; Rice, 2002) to examine

moral agency specifically in the context of social justice education. Further to this, I inquired into the complexities of trying to shift new teachers' beliefs, values and worldviews through teacher education programs and considered issues related to new teacher mentorship and induction (Brown, 2004; Causey et al., 2000; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Kagan, 1992; Levine-Rasky, 2001).

The theoretical perspective examined in this literature review will inform my analysis and interpretations of new teachers' narratives on social justice education. In the next chapter, I outline methodological constructs that also frame this study.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

In this methodology chapter, I begin by analyzing research related to teaching for social justice (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005; Hollins & Guzman, 2005; Philpott, 2002; Sleeter, 2001). Drawing on recommendations made in previous research, I propose eight means of addressing gaps in knowledge. In referring to discussions laid out in the literature review presented in Chapter Two, I situate my own research in educational discourses on teaching for social justice and offer a Canadian perspective. Next, I situate my research within the context of a teacher education program focused on social justice. Identifying the research participants, I discuss their backgrounds, employment and teaching experiences. To address recommendations made by Cochran-Smith and Zeichner (2005), I then locate myself as a researcher by discussing the complexities of my multiple roles within this study and outline links to my previous research. Following this, I frame my research within a qualitative paradigm and a constructivist-interpretive epistemology. Applying a feminist perspective, I explore the challenges of representing the voice of others in relation to conducting interviews as a method of data collection. Finally, I describe the methodological approach I adopted to examine new teachers' narratives and outline my data analysis methods.

3.1 Situating the Research Focus

As indicated in Chapter Two, several authors have critiqued previous research on teacher education for social justice because, up to this point, it has largely been characterized by short-term, small scale, qualitative studies that lacked a focus on

outcomes and consequences (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005; Hollins & Guzman, 2005; Shakman et al., 2007; Sleeter, 2001). In their respective reviews, these authors address research issues and concerns, citing gaps in both the research base and methodology to make recommendations for future research directions. To address all these concerns, I outline my research intentions and goals, present the modes of data gathering and analysis I employed, describe the participants and explain my roles as researcher, ethical considerations and the program in which participants were enrolled.

3.1.1 Addressing Gaps in Research

My research methodology is constructed as a response to collective concerns of various authors about the gaps in prior research (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005; Hollins & Guzman, 2005; Sleeter, 2001). Drawing on the recommendations of these authors, my research addresses the following methodological issues that will be further elaborated on in subsequent sections of this chapter:

- (1) My study examines new teachers' experiences and discourses of difference as they pertained to both their professional (including preservice teaching experiences) and personal lives.
- (2) Although the participants are preservice teachers in an education program in which I was an instructor, this was not a self-study into my own course or teaching. Rather, in this research, I use the program as a context for selecting and identifying my former students as cases for study.
- (3) I endeavor to clearly articulate the complexities of my multiple roles as a teacher educator, a researcher, participant, graduate student and teacher.

- (4) This research examines how new teachers construct their understandings of social justice and how these understandings informed/influenced their practice as they began their careers. As a result, this research follows new teachers into the field after they had graduated from teacher education programs.
- (5) My research does not directly examine admissions and selection processes related to preservice teacher predispositions. However, discussions on dispositions emerge in this research that could inform admissions to teacher education programs.
- (6) This research is grounded in broad theoretical, pedagogical and philosophical framework.
- (7) This study builds on a variety of teacher education research examining teachers' beliefs, values and worldviews in relation to their understandings of education focused specifically on social justice. Moreover, by focusing on new teacher experiences, this study directly addresses a recommendation resulting from my master's thesis research.
- (8) I provide a detailed description of my methodological approach to gathering data through semi-structured interviews, data analysis of participant narratives, and teacher education research contexts. Moreover, I situate my research not only in the field of educational research focused on social justice, but have also contributed to developing a Canadian perspective on this topic.

3.2 Contributing to the Research Base on Social Justice Education

In this study, I examine how new teachers constructed their understandings of social justice education and I explore how various discourses on social justice are integrated into new teachers' personal and professional lives. Understanding how social justice is learned and practiced can potentially become a springboard for developing teacher education programs and initiatives and can inform admissions procedures by highlighting applicants' predispositions toward teaching for social justice. Furthermore, if social justice education is to be interpreted as a commitment to enhancing all students' life chances (D'Souza et al., 2007; Shakman et al., 2007), then following these new teachers into schools can offer additional knowledge into the ways beliefs, understandings and interpretations influence classroom practices. Also, in focusing on the first years of professional service, my research can unearth significant data that better informs teacher educators, school administrators and mentorship program coordinators about the challenges surrounding induction into the teaching profession. In essence, examining how new teachers' understandings of social justice are constructed and then enacted in schools, can help to illuminate the connections between teacher preparation programs, preservice teachers' predispositions, learning and their emerging classroom practices.

3.2.1 A Canadian Context of Teacher Education

In exploring literature on teacher education research focused on teaching for social justice, multiculturalism and diversity, I discovered that Canadian studies were underrepresented. Although many issues and concerns in Canada parallel those emerging from the United States and other international educational contexts, interpretations,

perspectives, policies and educational agendas do vary, as outlined in Chapter Two. For example, in BC, until recently with the introduction of the high school elective course, *Social Justice 12* (Government of British Columbia, 2007), the discourse had been predominantly focused on social responsibility performance standards (Government of British Columbia, 2000, 2001). Whereas in the United States, the discourse focused mainly on social justice related to the “No Child Left Behind” policy. My research provides a Canadian and more specifically a British Columbian perspective to the field of teacher education research focused on teaching for social justice.

3.3 Context of a Teacher Education Program Focused on Social Justice

This study examines the understandings and practices of new teachers who had graduated from a particular Western Canadian university. At this particular university, the program is unique in that it follows a differentiated staffing model that employs seconded practicing teachers who work alongside university professors. Teacher educators are grouped together (three seconded teachers and one professor) to create a program of study for a group (identified as a module) of sixteen to thirty-two preservice teachers, and supervise them in their student teaching experiences.

This year long program took place over three terms. In the first semester, preservice teachers explored the connections between theory and practice. They divided their time equally between the school experiences (fieldwork/practical experience) and campus experiences (exploring theory and practice). In the second semester, students focused on methodology course work offered by either professors or sessional instructors. In the third semester, they engaged in an extended practicum /field experience. For

students who begin in January, the second and third semester are reversed. Over the course of three years, I co-taught and supervised 128 preservice teachers.

Each year, my particular instructional team developed a program focused on teaching for social justice (Appendix A, p.187). In the 2006-2007, my seconded teaching partner expanded our focus to include ecological justice. His contribution to the participants' understandings is evident in the data as some included creating ecological experiences for their students as part of their discourse about social justice education. Although the composition of the instructional team changed each of the three years, I remained working with the same designated university professor to offer consistency in the program focused on social justice.

During the one year program preservice teachers engaged in activities, professional readings and discussions around the topic of social justice (see Appendix A, p. 187). During these sessions preservice teachers were asked to explore their own understandings and beliefs about a variety of social justice issues. By participating in these sessions, they were also introduced to the diverse perspectives, interpretations and voices of their instructors, classmates and through professional literature regarding social justice education. Moreover, a variety of definitions of social justice were introduced and explored noting complexities, challenges and implications for education. Throughout their program, preservice teachers were required to develop professional workshops for their classmates and curriculum experiences for their students that addressed issues of social justice. Topics chosen for developing curriculum experiences for the children they taught varied depending on the comfort level, interpretations and perceptions of social justice held by individual sponsor teachers.

3.4 Identifying the Participants

Participants were selected from a larger population of new teachers who participated in a university teacher education program focused on social justice education. An email message, and/or phone call was distributed to all members who had participated in this particular teacher education module over a three-year span (2005-2007). Once participants agreed to participate in this research project, they were given a permission form to complete that outlined the details of the research.

Cochran-Smith & Zeichner (2005), Hollins & Guzman (2005), and Sleeter (2001) suggest a need for longitudinal studies that follow teachers from initial preparation to their beginning career experiences. Although I could clearly see the value in following one particular group of teachers as they continued on through several years of their teaching profession, time constraints within the scope of a PhD study prevented me from conducting a longitudinal case study. Furthermore, in the context of governmental cutbacks in educational funding, and a shifting demographic (declining enrollment of students in public schools) in British Columbia at this time, many new teachers were employed as Teachers-on-Call, or are hired on temporary, short-term contracts, many of which are job-share situations (see Tables 2-4, pp. 67-68). Those working as full-time enrolling teachers often found work in private or international teaching assignments. As a result, only eleven of the 27 participants in this study had their own classrooms in which to practice their craft. Of these 11, 5 had their own classrooms in which to practice, while six shared a classroom with at least one other teacher. Consequently, as my research design unfolded, it became clear that it would be much more practical and representative of new teaching experiences to conduct a study of three consecutive groups (2005, 2006,

2007 graduates) from the program who were new teachers at various beginning stages of their teaching careers.

So although this study does not respond to researchers' call for longitudinal studies (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005; Hollins & Guzman, 2005; Sleeter, 2001), it does attempt to create a picture of teacher development over time, since these participants were in their first, second, or third year of teaching. Furthermore, through their discourses, the participants created a sort of narrative timeline that could be useful in identifying characteristics, dispositions and conditions that might be applied to the experiences of other teachers who have graduated from programs focused on teaching for social justice. This baseline data can also be useful for future studies that continued to track the experiences of these participants as they move through their careers.

3.4.1 Participant Background, Employment and Teaching Experiences

The 27 participants in my study came from a variety of backgrounds, ethnicities, and cultural experiences (see Table 1, p. 65). Of the 23 female participants, all but 5 were Caucasian. The 5 female volunteers came from Korean, Chinese, Peruvian, South Asian and Egyptian cultural/ethnic backgrounds. Of the 4 male volunteers, all were Caucasian except for one who was of Chinese ancestry. Twenty-three of the participants were born in Canada. However, those born elsewhere (England, China, Korea and Peru) were partially raised in Canada and attended schools in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia. At the time of the interviews, nineteen of the participants were under the age of 30, 6 were between the ages 30 and 40 and two were between the ages 40 and 55. Twenty-six of the participants were raised in urban or suburban environments. Only one participant was from a rural, northern Canadian community. The majority of the

participants were from middle-class backgrounds, although one participant discussed his early struggles with the social welfare system.

Of the 19 participants under the age of 30, most had cited teaching as a first career. Those participants who had worked as Special Education Assistants or Youth Workers, or had volunteered in school and community organizations, cited that these experiences were instrumental in shaping their understandings of social justice. Whereas, three participants who had worked/volunteered internationally, cited these experiences as influential in further shaping their understandings of social justice (see Table 1, p. 65). Most Caucasian participants raised in the Lower Mainland of BC discussed how early experiences in diverse urban and suburban schools and communities were significant in helping them better understand those who were culturally/racially/ethnically different from them.

After graduating, most of the participants were teaching in some capacity in a public or independent school located in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia. However, one participant was working in college teaching basic adult education, one was teaching in rural British Columbia, and two had worked in international school environments. Of the 27 participants, 22 were working in BC public school settings, 18 had secured a teaching position (whether temporary, full-time, or short-term) and 7 participants remained employed as Teachers-On-Call. Table 2 (p. 67) outlines the cumulative teaching positions held by each of the participants from the time they began their career to the time of the interview. It is evident that many of the participants began their careers as a Teacher-On-Call. Many then moved into temporary term positions ranging in length from nine weeks to one year. Most of the temporary positions

Table 1: Participant Background Information

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Background	Relevant work, volunteer or travel experiences other than teaching
Ryan	Male	27	Caucasian Canadian; born and raised in suburban Lower Mainland of BC	Youth Worker
Richard	Male	30	Caucasian Canadian; born and raised in suburban Lower Mainland of BC	Youth Worker; traveled and worked internationally
Tobin	Male	30	Caucasian Canadian; born and raised northern rural Canadian community	Traveled and volunteered internationally
Jian	Male	37	Chinese Canadian; born and raised in urban Lower Mainland of BC	
Beth	Female	49	Caucasian British Canadian; born in England and partially raised in suburban Lower Mainland of BC	
Meg	Female	26	Caucasian Canadian; born and raised in suburban BC	
Sandra	Female	52	Caucasian Canadian; born and raised in suburban Lower Mainland of BC	
Halle	Female	24	Caucasian Canadian; born and raised in suburban Lower Mainland of BC	Youth Worker
Sun	Female	29	Korean Canadian; born in Korea and raised in suburban BC	Volunteer supporting new Korean immigrants; Traveled internationally
Elle	Female	29	Caucasian Canadian; born and raised in suburban Lower Mainland of BC	
Ciana	Female	25	Caucasian Canadian; born and raised in suburban Lower Mainland of BC	Volunteer in diverse school communities
Jill	Female	28	Caucasian Canadian; born and raised in suburban Lower Mainland of BC	
Mared	Female	24	Caucasian Canadian; born and raised in suburban Lower Mainland of BC	
Ana	Female	24	Peruvian Canadian; born in Peru and raised in suburban Lower Mainland of BC	Volunteer in diverse school communities; Traveled internationally
Kiran	Female	27	South Asian Canadian; born and raised in suburban Lower Mainland of BC	
Liz	Female	29	Caucasian Canadian; born in urban Alberta and partially raised in suburban Lower Mainland of BC	Volunteer at a women's shelter/crisis line
Lian	Female	38	Chinese Canadian; born and raised in urban Lower Mainland of BC	
Emily	Female	26	Caucasian Canadian; born and raised in suburban BC	Traveled and volunteered internationally
Adelle	Female	24	Caucasian Canadian; born and raised in suburban Lower Mainland of BC	Volunteer in diverse school communities
Jenna	Female	36	Caucasian Canadian; born and raised in suburban Lower Mainland of BC	Special Education Assistant
Jada	Female	25	Caucasian Canadian; born and raised in suburban Lower Mainland of BC	Special Education Assistant
Anika	Female	27	Caucasian Canadian; born and raised in suburban Lower Mainland of BC; lived in Southern US	Volunteer in diverse school communities
Naila	Female	24	Egyptian Canadian; born and raised in suburban Lower Mainland of BC	Traveled internationally
Elyse	Female	26	Caucasian Canadian; born and raised in suburban Lower Mainland of BC	
Raine	Female	25	Caucasian Canadian; born and raised in suburban BC; traveled and worked overseas	Traveled and worked internationally
Hannah	Female	33	Caucasian Canadian; born and raised in suburban Lower Mainland of BC; lived in Eastern Canada	
Jasmine	Female	25	Caucasian Canadian; born and raised in suburban Lower Mainland of BC	

held by these participants were to replace permanent teachers on leave of absence. As well, to fill the needs of a particular school, many of the positions held by these new teachers were pieced together to create a unique and challenging assignment. For example, one participant's 100%, fulltime teaching position at the elementary school level was broken into: 20% Gifted; 10% English as a Second Language; 30% Language Arts; 40% Music/Computers/Drama.

The 27 participants were grouped by graduation year. Group 1 (Table 2, p. 67) included 6 graduates completing their teacher education program December 2005. Group 2 (Table 3, p. 67) included 10 graduates completing December 2006. Group 3 (Table 4, p. 68) included 11 graduates completing August 2007 and one graduate completing April 2008 (this participant finished her practicum experience at the same time as the other participants from Group 3, however, she extended her final coursework over two additional semesters). Of the three groups, Group 3 participants were able to self-select the teacher education program module focused on social justice. Group 1 and 2 participants did not have this option and were randomly chosen to participate in a module focused on social justice based predominantly on elementary or middle school interests and geographical location. Those from Group 3 who did not self-select the module focused on social justice were chosen because of interests, work/volunteer experiences and coursework.

Table 2: Group 1 – Participant Graduation Data/Teaching Experiences

Group	Pseudonym	Selected Social Justice Module	Grad. Date	Cumulative Teaching Experience at the Time of Interview
1	Ryan	n/a	Dec. 05	BC Public Secondary School – TOC; 4 month Full-time Temporary Position; One year Full-time Term position
1	Emily	n/a	Dec. 05	BC Public Elementary School – 6 month Full-time Temporary position; TOC/40% Temporary Position
1	Raine	n/a	Dec. 05	Independent Canadian International School in China – 1 year Full time position
1	Beth	n/a	Dec. 05	BC Public Elementary School - Montessori - Full-time Term positions
1	Richard	n/a	Dec. 05	Japanese Public School – Japan – 1 year Full time position; BC Independent Elementary School – 1 year Full time position
1	Meg	n/a	Dec. 05	BC Public Elementary School – Term Positions – 20% classroom/80% music; 30% classroom/70% music

Table 3: Group 2 – Participant Graduation Data/Teaching Experiences

Group	Pseudonym	Selected Social Justice Module	Grad. Date	Cumulative Teaching Experience at the Time of Interview
2	Sandra	n/a	Dec. 06	BC Public Elementary School – TOC; Job-Share 20% Temporary position
2	Halle	n/a	Dec. 06	BC Public Elementary School - 6 month Full-time Temporary position; 1 year Full-time Temporary position
2	Sun	n/a	Dec. 06	BC Public Elementary School – TOC
2	Elle	n/a	Dec. 06	BC Public Elementary School – TOC; 40% Temporary positions
2	Ciana	n/a	Dec. 06	BC Public Elementary School – TOC
2	Jill	n/a	Dec. 06	BC Public Elementary/Secondary School – TOC
2	Mared	n/a	Dec. 06	BC Public Secondary School – TOC; 1 year Full-time Continuing position
2	Ana	n/a	Dec.06	BC Public Elementary School – TOC; 90% Continuing position – Learning Support/music/ESL/computers/drama
2	Kiran	n/a	Dec. 06	BC Public Elementary/Secondary School – TOC
2	Liz	n/a	Dec. 06	BC Public Elementary School – TOC; 3 month Full-time Term position; 77% Term position

Table 4: Group 3 – Participant Graduation Data/Teaching Experiences

Group	Pseudonym	Selected Social Justice Module	Grad. Date	Cumulative Teaching Experience at the Time of Interview
3	Lian	Self-Selected	Aug. 07	BC Public Elementary/Secondary School – TOC
3	Tobin	Self-Selected	Aug. 07	BC Public Elementary School – 6 month Full-time Term position
3	Adelle	Self-Selected	Aug. 07	BC Public Elementary School – 50% Temporary position
3	Jenna	Self-Selected	Aug. 07	BC Public Elementary School – TOC; 6 month Full-time Temporary position
3	Jada	Self-Selected	Aug. 07	BC Independent School – 1 year Full-time Term position – Learning Support Teacher
3	Anika	Self-Selected	April 08	Currently on Maternity Leave.
3	Naila	Did not self-select	Aug. 07	BC Public Elementary School – TOC; Full-time Temporary position – Learning Support Teacher
3	Elyse	Did not self-select	Aug. 07	BC Public Elementary School – TOC; 9 week Full-time Temporary position
3	Jian	Did not self-select	Aug. 07	BC Public Secondary School – TOC; 1 year Full-time Term position
3	Hannah	Self-Selected	Aug. 07	BC College - Adult Basic Education TOC
3	Jasmine	Self-Selected	Aug. 07	BC Public Elementary School – TOC; 4 month Full-time Temporary Position; 60% Grades 5&6/40%Resource & Teacher Relief – Temporary Position

3.5 Reflecting on the Position/Location and Multiple Roles of the Researcher

As a concerned educator committed to teaching for social change, I made a conscious decision to act on my previous research recommendations (Philpott, 2002) by accepting a position as a teacher educator at a Western Canadian University. My active role in helping to shape, teach and evaluate preservice teachers in particular program focused on social justice was characterized by multiple identities, that of: teacher educator and evaluator; curriculum designer; public school teacher; researcher; participant; and learner/graduate student. Initially, when I began exploring the idea of researching the journeys and understandings of my own students (most of whom are now practicing teachers) I could see myriad challenges around research ethics, authenticity and validity. However, investigations into other studies (Ladson-Billings, 1994, 2001;

Cochran-Smith, 2004; Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005) revealed that, although this could be a research concern, it need not become a barrier to conducting authentic, valid research. To address this, I examine the complexities of these interwoven, multiple roles, and to make them as transparent as possible for all those participating in, and reading the research.

In reflecting on my role as a teacher educator specific to this research, I defined myself as both an insider and outsider (Wenger, 1998). In a sense, while I was the faculty supervisor/instructor for the participants of this study, I was afforded insider status. In this role I was sharing the collective experiences of these preservice teachers as they engaged with discourses on social justice and grappled with the context of practice teaching. However, as the participants graduated and moved away from the university setting to be inducted into the teaching profession, my role in their personal and professional lives shifted to become more of an outsider. On reflection, I could see how my role as an insider had been beneficial in that my previously established relationships with all the participants could have made them feel comfortable speaking to me and make my research cases more embraceable (Stake, 2005). Yet, at the same time, I could see how this familiarity could pose challenges such as trying to remain objective when interpreting data. As well, when I was a more active participant in shaping curriculum that may have influenced social justice understandings for these participants, I might have been less able to step back and observe from a distance. Also, when I was more involved with these participants, it may have been more difficult for them to separate their own understandings from mine. Although complex, overall I would say that by experiencing both the roles of an insider and an outsider I have been able to bring

something unique to this research. As an insider I was provided privileged access into the personal and professional lives of the participants, then as an outsider I was able to create a bit more distance and objectivity.

Also, considering the complexities of my various roles, I was acutely aware of my own agenda as a researcher. As a graduate student, I had a dissertation to prepare and defend following the specific rules and protocol set out by the university. As a teacher and teacher educator, I have strong ideas about social justice education and a personal commitment to improving the life chances of all children through constant reflection on the implications of my own actions and practice. Also, as a teacher and teacher educator working within an authoritative, and at times oppressive, education system, I continued to be concerned about new teacher induction. As a participant co-constructing meanings, I was constantly aware of how my ideas, beliefs and worldview influenced the discussions and interpretations presented in this research. Acknowledging the complexities of my multiple roles, I remained acutely aware of how I needed to pause and step back to make space for voices to emerge, and at the same time learn to let go of any of my preconceived assumptions so that I could more clearly see what the data was telling me.

3.6 Representing the Voice of Another

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005) qualitative research has evolved over time to embody a more “humanistic and social justice commitment [aimed at] study[ing] the social world from the perspective of the interacting individual” (p. xvi). Specifically, researchers adopting a constructivist-interpretive epistemology examine how social experiences are created and given meaning. And according to Guba and Lincoln (2005), it is these meaning-making activities that become springboards for initiating action. In

keeping with this epistemological stance of knowledge as socially constructed, my research questions asked how new teachers' constructed their understandings of social justice and how those understandings informed their teaching practice. Accordingly, I adopted a qualitative methodology that drew largely on interviews with participants, which allowed them to further co-construct their knowledge and understandings of social justice through interactions and dialogue with the researcher.

I also drew on feminist perspectives in designing my research. According to Olesen (2005), researchers adopting a feminist perspective must become acutely aware of the complexities of representing the voice of another as they document how people construct their world. Thus, as I described individual perceptions, worldviews and understandings about social justice, it was imperative that I frame my research in such a manner that it honoured the voices of participants.

Representing the voice of another is a complicated and at times problematic process (Olesen, 2005). Whether we can or have the ability to speak for another person is questionable. As a researcher, I posed questions and the participants and I co-constructed the meaning of these questions through dialogue. However, the final interpretation was ultimately mine as I analyzed and interpreted the transcribed data. As Margaret Mead (in Lutkehaus, 1995) suggests it is a view "from where I sit" (p. 192), a personal interpretation by *me* as the author and researcher. Within a constructivist-interpretive epistemology and qualitative research paradigm, the interview process in my research was viewed as dialogue in itself, as a form of co-construction. This notion of dialogue, articulated by Guba and Lincoln (1994) and Lutkehaus (1995), evoked Bakhtinian theory (1981, p. 433) whereby all dialogue or "utterance" was defined by interactions and no

utterance stands alone but was intertwined with past and present interactions. During my research interviews, as interviewer and interviewee interacted with each other on personal and professional levels, the “zone of contact” increased the opportunities for new ideas and understandings to develop. As we expanded our “social horizons,” new interactions gave birth to new insights (Bakhtin, 1991, pp. 344-346). From this perspective, the interview process itself allowed for a dynamic exchange of information giving rise to the co-creation of voice.

Such interactions were based on human dialogue and required some understanding of the context in which voices and interpretations emerged. Both the researcher and the participant came to the project with various experiences, values and beliefs and each interpreted events and stories differently. As LeCompte and Preissle (1993) suggested, this creates “multiple voices and cross-cutting, often conflicting, discourses” (p. 160). Historically, researcher interpretations were privileged over those of the participants. However, contemporary qualitative research methodology and feminist perspectives have led us to honour the beliefs and interpretations of participants as being equally valid, even if radically different from those of the researcher.

3.7 Implications of a Case Study Approach

Case study, as a research approach, is often considered “naturalistic” in style as it considers what it means to be human in the here and now in a real world context (Gillham, 2000, p. 2). As with a constructivist-interpretive epistemology, this research approach is concerned with participants’ meanings, translations, interpretations and understandings. The researcher’s role when using this strategy becomes one of exploring the “experiential knowledge of the case” (Stake, 2005, p. 444) to determine the

underlying reasons participants interpret the world through various feelings and perceptions. Case study as a qualitative research strategy is concerned with describing the social processes at work in particular contexts, which may lead to a more complete understanding of what might need to be changed (in programs, society, practices, etc.).

As Stake (2005) and LeCompte and Preissle (1993) outline, cases are organized around the boundaries of particular institutions, cultures and/or issues. In my research, participants were defined by a culture that emerged from a common educational experience as graduates of a particular program focused on social justice. Furthermore, case studies draw on multiple sources of data to inform research analysis and interpretations. Although I attempted to utilize a variety of fieldwork approaches such as viewing artifacts, interviewing and researcher field notes, I found that interviews provided my primary sources of data. As a result, my particular research, though similar to case study, draws principally from interviews as the main data source. However, in keeping with principles associated with case study methodology, I identified groups of participants based on the following criteria: they (a) belonged to a culture of graduates from the same teacher education program module, (b) they all belonged to a culture of teaching, and (c) they all shared a common experience of being beginning teachers. My study focused on how new teachers constructed their understandings of social justice education and how these understandings informed/influenced their practice as they began their careers. Also, common to all the groups selected was that I was one of their preservice teacher education program instructors. According to Stake (2005), personal experiences with participants provided the researcher with insights and understandings that help with interpreting the information gathered. In my case, I shared the participants'

preservice teacher experiences and I could also draw on my past personal experiences of being a new teacher, which made the groups “embraceable” in Stake’s words (p. 455). Initially, when constructing my research methodology, I thought that in identifying three distinct groups of new teachers (either in their first, second, or third year of teaching) I could employ a comparative case strategy. I made an assumption that I would find differences between the discourses and experiences of each group. Such group differences did not surface. Rather, as the analysis unfolded, many common experiences *across* the groups became obvious. As well, initially I assumed differences would emerge between those who had self-selected their teacher education program focused on social justice and those who did not (see Tables 1-3, pp. 65 & 67). However, such differences did not surface in my analysis of the data. As a result, I could see that this research focused more on the overall collective experiences and that any comparisons that emerged related to more individual experiences rather than membership in any specific group. So, by examining the data gathered from interviewing all of the participants, my underlying premise was that by focusing on particular individual instances and experiences I could seek out what was unique and/or common to the group as a whole.

3.8 Semi-Structured Interviews and Physical Artifacts as Research Approaches

Following suggestions from Cochran-Smith and Zeichner (2005), I attempted to use both interviews and viewing physical artifacts as approaches to gather data from different sources (Eisenhardt, 2002; Gillham, 2000). In this research project, I conducted semi-structured interviews (Gillham, 2000, LeCompte & Preissle, 1993) that engaged participants in narratives (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995) about their past and present understandings of social justice. Choosing to follow a semi-structured interview format

using open-ended questions created possibilities for varied responses. Participants shared narratives about life experiences and elaborated on personal perspectives and concerns. By constructing an interview *guide* (Appendix B, p. 189), I was able to engage in a more casual and natural conversation while weaving in my research questions (Gillham, 2000). The questions for the interviews were loosely organized topically around personal and professional experiences and according to a logical sequence of topics. However, because conversations moved naturally from topic to topic, the pre-written questions were referred to simply as a means of guiding the conversation (Patton, 1990).

Interviewing as a primary means of data collection was appropriate for this research because it provided a medium in which teachers were given an opportunity to express a voice (Jorgenson, 1989; LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). Once participants worked through any initial reservation or hesitance about the interview process, they often opened up and began sharing personal and professional stories. The nature and quality of the discussions led me to more fully grasp Clandinin & Connelly's (1995) argument that teachers need safe places to share their concerns and anxieties.

As the participants and I came to the project with different background experiences, beliefs and values influencing how we each would interpret the data, it became a challenge for me as a researcher to adequately represent their voices. Striving to remain open, I had to continually examine my own pre-conceived notions and expectations and notice how these played out my interview techniques (Gillham, 2000; Anderson & Jack, 1991). Periodically I asked myself questions such as: What do I expect to find? Or what do I want to find? (Gillham, 2000). This helped me to "decentre" and

become more detached from the outcome and my own “place in the scheme of things” (Gillham, 2000, p. 28).

Although I listened and acknowledged ideas that the participants presented, I found that it was not always easy to take a less active role. Listening carefully to the stories being shared was, as I learned, a craft. Anderson and Jack (1991) noted that the “need to listen critically to our interviews, to our responses as well as to our questions [it] helps us to hear what a person has implied, suggested, and started to say but didn’t” (p. 17). Adopting the role of *engaged listener* was, I discovered, easier with some respondents than with others. This could be a result of a variety of factors such as prior interpretations of the relationship between the researcher and the interviewee, comfort level of the interviewee, or level of engagement by both parties.

Although participation was voluntary, some of the participants alluded to feeling a bit nervous about their answers because I was a former instructor in their teacher education program. Some were a bit hesitant because they felt somehow that they *should* know the “right” answer to questions posed since they completed their teacher education program in a module focused on social justice education. I also informed them that my research was a learning experience and reminded them that although they were aware that I had worked a great deal on issues of social justice because of personal interest, I was more interested in their understandings and interpretations and was not by any means to be considered an “expert” on the subject.

Others seemed concerned with answering questions “appropriately” as though the interview process in some way would be a judgment of their knowledge or character. This occurred even after assuring them (both in the initial email and again prior to starting the

interview) that I was not seeking any particular answers and that I was hoping that they felt comfortable enough to share their experiences openly and honestly. Reminders about this throughout the interview seemed to relax participants and the interviews became more of an informal discussion. As noted by Gillman (2000), it was critical that I be conscious of those whose motives might be to *help* me as the researcher. Being cognizant of whether “[I’m] getting representative of all shades of opinions” (Gillham, 2000, p. 30) became a research challenge. Gillman suggested that researchers needed to be aware that during the interview process, a common discrepancy exists between what people say and what people do. Consequently, in my research I needed to be cognizant that these new teachers may be communicating their understandings of social justice practice by talking about how they see themselves in ideal situations. Using this knowledge, I was able to sense when such discrepancies were emerging in the participants’ answers and paraphrase, redirect, or restate questions in new ways to clarify answers and further co-construct meanings. Nevertheless, I am mindful that participants’ concerns, anxieties and motives shaped what they said and what type of data I collected. This I acknowledged as a limitation of this study.

When possible, I went to participants’ specific school locations and sat in their classrooms after school hours to create a more authentic interview experience. Of the twenty-six participants interviewed, I was able to interview fifteen of them in their classroom settings. While sitting in their classrooms, I also invited them to discuss the practical aspects of social justice education in relation to physical artifacts such as student work samples or teacher-developed curriculum. Unfortunately, as many of the participants were in job-share situations and were not teaching in their *own* classroom

settings, they articulated that they found it difficult to share examples of student work or curriculum they had developed. For others, because of their location (international, or long distance) it was impossible to actually view examples of their work with students. However, for some who had their own classrooms, or were creative in developing strategies or ideas that could be applied in a variety of classroom settings, providing physical examples was not as difficult. For those who did share curriculum ideas and strategies, I mostly viewed a small selection of children's literature related to social justice issues, which they used to stimulate student discussions and writing, or student response logs and posters. However, because few were able to offer examples of curriculum or activities they had developed, I relied predominantly on oral accounts of personal and teaching experiences as provided during participant interviews.

Each audio taped interview was approximately 1 to 1 1/2 hours in length and then later transcribed for analysis. Taping the interviews allowed me to focus on the process of the interview and give my attention entirely to the interviewee. In the course of the interview process, I became aware that recording did appear to raise the anxiety of some of the participants. In reflecting on this process, I wondered if the presence of the digital recorder somewhat altered the flow and information of the interview.

After the completion of an interview, I often spent time reflecting on the experience and entering field notes in my research journal. Field notes entered usually spoke to ideas that occurred to me during the interviews, while viewing student work, or through observing the general material organization of the classroom. For example, field notes included the following comments: "I noticed that like many other participants, Emily commented on how her teacher education program showed her how social justice

could be infused into her teaching practice” (Field notes, May 27, 2007) ; “participant shared student response logs reflecting their thoughts about this issues raised in a book written by a Aboriginal woman who attended a residential school in British Columbia. I notice that Ryan was often exploring ways to engage students in poignant and relevant topics” (Field notes, May 22, 2007).

3.8.1 *Narrative Inquiry*

Although my research focused on interviews as a means of collecting data, participants frequently felt compelled to share their experiences as a personal narrative. As a result, I acknowledged the narrative nature of research as proposed by researchers (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995; Connelly & Clandinin 1990, 1994; Gomez, 1996; Rogers, Marshall & Tyson, 2006). Connelly and Clandinin (1990) contend that by nature people “lead storied lives and tell stories of those lives” (p. 2) and that researchers involved in narrative inquiry, collect and describe these stories. Engaging in the process, the researcher, along with the participants, become storytellers as stories are told and retold in new contexts, and new meanings are collaboratively constructed. Critical to this process was the construction of a researcher/participant relationship where both the participant’s and the researcher’s voices were heard in the telling and retelling of the stories. Applied to the context of teaching, Connelly and Clandinin (1990) claim that teachers’ life experiences become the context for making meaning of school cultures and situations. Moreover, these stories are subject to retelling based on perceptions of present experiences and interpretations of past experiences. Clandinin and Connelly (1990, p. 4) contend that in this process the participant was “engaged in living, telling, retelling, and reliving stories” simultaneously. As a result, by engaging in conversations around the

topic of social justice, the participants and I often discovered new perceptions and understandings that led to new interpretations of previously told stories.

Rogers et al. (2006) argue that narrative inquiry is a process whereby participants share experiences and co-construct meanings while participating in small group discussions over a period of time. While my particular research did not focus on small group discussions, the participants had previously engaged in multiple small group discussions about their personal notions of social justice education while enrolled in their teacher education program. Although none of the narratives that emerged from these prior small group discussions were formally documented, they appeared to have influenced many of the ideas and understandings participants shared during the interview process.

3.9 Data Interpretations and Analysis

To ensure confidentiality, I provided each interviewee with a pseudonym that was used on the transcripts and throughout that data analysis. To provide an additional opportunity for the co-construction of meanings presented in the data, participants were provided with copies of the transcripts to review and edit for clarity and accuracy. Those who chose to edit the transcripts returned the edited versions to me via email. The transcripts were then analyzed for emerging themes and coded with key words to reveal repeated patterns or identify links between the responses of different respondents, as indicated in the following researcher note excerpt : “again, as articulated by other participants, ideas presented in their particular teacher education program resonated with what they already understood about social justice, e.g. ‘liberal/open-minded parents’ (articulated by Beth, Raine and Naila)” (Field notes, November 6, 2007). Moreover, data

that stood out as unique, or compelling was also highlighted as it could potentially lead to better understanding dispositions that guide specific individuals to approach social justice education in unexpected ways. Initially the data was loosely organized into general themes such as, “understandings that originated from family”, containing smaller sub-themes such as, “liberal, or open-minded parents”, or “political family discussions”. These general themes were then organized under three broad themes: “discourses on social justice”; “grappling with the context of teaching”; “visions of the future”. Following this, key quotes were selected based on whether they were representative of perceptions expressed in the sub-theme, or unique to the perceptions expressed in a particular sub-theme.

In this analysis, triangulation was ensured by considering multiple lenses (e.g. the perceptions of the researcher, participants, or theory) to verify interpretations. Triangulation of data sources was also adopted by comparing data from each individual case. Although interpretations were presented thematically to demonstrate common participant experiences, it was also significant to present data that was unique to one or two participants. In doing this I was able to highlight how specific discourses, circumstances and life experiences had led specific individuals to either follow similar, or very different pathways. Moreover, I used this information to contrast experiences and dispositions⁴ specific to a few participants with the experiences more generally applicable to a group of participants.

⁴ I use 'dispositions' here following Patricia White's (1996) use of the term. That is to say, a disposition lies between an attitude and an action. Put simply, a disposition is an attitude that we hold in such a way that it leads us toward particular actions in interaction with others. There are significant overlaps between dispositions, habits and virtues, but a fuller analysis of those terms lies beyond the scope of this thesis.

3.10 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I analyzed literature on teacher education research and addressed research gaps and methodological issues that arose (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005, Hollins & Guzman, 2005; Sleeter, 2001). I then linked my current research to my past master's research. Following this, I discussed how my particular study would endeavor to address the concerns raised by previous educational researchers by: (a) clearly articulating the multiple roles of the researcher; (b) examining discourses of difference; (c) clarifying issues about researcher self-study; (d) conducting research that followed participants out into the field after graduation; and (e) offering information that could be useful to education program policy-makers. Following this, I situated my research in the field of teacher education research in general, and specifically in the field of teacher education research focused on social justice. In doing this, I outlined my potential contributions to the field through offering a Canadian perspective and situated my research in the context of a university teacher education program focused on social justice.

In a subsequent section, I identified the participants by providing personal and professional background information and discussing selection processes. Following this, I reflected on the complexities of my position/location and multiple roles as researcher, graduate student, teacher and teacher educator. Then I reflected on the complexities of representing the voice of another through introducing a constructivist-interpretive epistemology and feminist perspectives (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Olesen, 2005). I then examined the parallels of the methodology adopted in my study to a case study approach (Stake, 2005). Afterward, I explained why semi-structured

interviews became my primary data source and described the analysis strategies I adopted.

As suggested by teacher education researchers (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005; D'Souza et al., 2007; Shakman et al., 2007), this research aimed to identify and explain conditions and contexts in which new teachers were able to (or not able to) incorporate social justice into their teaching practice. In doing this I hoped to offer research results that could inform policy and practice related to social justice education.

CHAPTER 4

DISCOURSES ON SOCIAL JUSTICE

4.1 Narrative Interpretation as Montage

Derived from the French word meaning “an assembly of pieces”, *montage* has come to be understood as a film technique whereby scenes are edited in rapid succession to create compressed narrative information. In this first section, presenting an analytic interpretation of the data, I introduce a montage that encapsulates the individual and collective narratives of the new teachers who are participating in this study. Their narratives about their experiences, much like montage, were subject to a first phase of editing in their retelling during the interviews. In this chapter, they have been edited again in a new montage to present the dominant themes that have emerged following the analysis procedures presented in Chapter Three. The interpretive discussion also references the theoretical framework found in Chapter Two. In keeping with the metaphor of montage, the narratives presented in this chapter will provide the background story for Chapter Five, where I provide an interpretive analysis of the ways these new teachers grappled with the context of teaching social justice and shared their visions of the future.

4.1.1 Framing Literature

Several educational researchers suggest that one’s worldviews, values and beliefs ultimately impact/influence one’s teaching practice (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005; Dei, 1996; Delpit, 1998; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Palmer, 1998; Sleeter, 1993). These researchers argue that for this reason, it is essential that we first become aware of those

worldviews, values and beliefs and then examine how they inform our teaching practice. Moreover, theorists (Bakhtin, 1981; Holland et al. 1998) and researchers (Allard & Santoro, 2004; Harro, 2000) contend that it is essential to examine how identities are socially constructed through discourses, roles, affiliations and interactions in order to develop greater awareness of how we act and interact in the world. Drawing on sociocultural theories, as well as pedagogical and philosophical perspectives (Applebaum, 2002; Levinson, 1999; Rice, 2002), this interpretive chapter examines participants' discourses on social justice informed by family, education, sociocultural affiliations, work and volunteer experiences.

4.2 Family Discourses Informing Understandings of Social Justice

Overwhelmingly, participants indicated that their understandings of social justice were tightly linked to authoritative discourses adopted in their families. Viewing the authoritative discourses (Bakhtin, 1981) as emerging in part within the socially constructed figured worlds (Holland et al. 1998) of early family experiences, my analysis of participants' discourses on social justice uncovered family discourse as a primary theme in their narratives.

Beth, Raine and Naila (all raised in diverse middle-class families) noted that having very liberal-minded parents helped them become more open-minded and unbiased in their worldviews. This notion was clearly articulated by Beth,

Certainly having been brought up by very liberal parents. I was always brought up pretty open-minded for someone of my generation so I got to see the world in pretty unbiased ways while being very aware that I'd been brought up differently from a lot of other people so that I never had to make a journey, for example, towards being not racist or not homophobic because I was just brought up that way even though it was the 60's in England and most people were not brought up that way. My parents' best friend in England from like before I was born was a

gay man. Still is their best friend. But also knowing that I was raised different from other people. So that was a gift I got from my parents. (Nov. 1, 2007)

In this narrative, Beth discussed how, compared to other adults in England in the 1960s, her parents were much more progressive in their beliefs and worldviews. As one of the older participants, Beth felt that because of these progressive family discourses, her beliefs, values and worldview were much more liberal than many others of her age. As a result, Beth viewed authoritative family discourses as a “gift” shaping her current internally persuasive discourses and understandings of social justice. Moreover, because of these early understandings about race and sexual orientation, Beth implied that as an adult/teacher, she was able to be more accepting and open-minded when engaging with discourses of difference.

Raine’s discussion elaborated on this notion of open-mindedness by highlighting how family discourses aided her in becoming non-judgmental and more accepting of others.

I mean the one thing that I think you learn you have to learn from your family. You can’t always learn later on is not to judge and if you learn not to judge then you can kind of sit back and take everything with a grain of salt and go with the flow. I think it must be really hard for people who do come from a judgmental family to try to change that... It’s a problem people have to overcome. Put them into a little class, you know, they are this color, they are this type of people—Like I think my cousins—my black cousins—I never, ever thought ‘Oh my god, you are black!’ Never. Because I was introduced to it at a young age and it is not a big deal. You don’t judge on color but unless you’ve been specifically taught to view it like that. There was never any racism in my family that I can pin down at least. It helps having your extended family being from different ethnic backgrounds too. (Raine, Aug. 10, 2007)

Researchers argued that we needed to increase personal awareness in understanding ourselves and how we are situated regarding race, class, ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation (Allard & Santoro, 2004; Dei, 1996; Cochran-Smith, 2004; Cross, 2005;

Delpit, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Sleeter, 1993, 2001; Sleeter & Grant, 2007; Zeichner, 1996, 2003). In her narrative, Raine discussed how because she was raised to be non-judgmental, she felt she was more able to accept others who were racially different than her. She, much like Beth, reflected on how challenging it would be for someone to take a non-judgmental stance if they had not had these early family discourses and experiences.

In other narratives about understandings of social justice, family discourses on politics and awareness of world issues figured prominently. Hannah, Liz, Raine and Richard discussed how political family discussions/debates helped them to become more conscious of social issues. This was articulated in Richard's understandings,

Family upbringing—definitely. We always had really political debates around the dinner table. I mean [my dad] had me watching the news every night from the time I was knee-high to a grasshopper. So being aware of the world around us and debating and discussing social issues have always been a part of our family. (Nov. 8, 2007)

In Richard's narrative, engaging with news stories that later became topics for family debates appeared to be instrumental in shaping his worldview. Moreover, Richard viewed these authoritative family discourses on political consciousness as valuable learning that was ultimately influential in defining his early understandings of social justice.

The narratives of most of the participants made reference to family practices of respecting and accepting differences. Or as in Jasmine's family, "treat people the way you want to be treated" (Nov. 12, 2008). Although there were many examples of these discourses, I will draw on the narratives of Mared and Anika to highlight these notions of respect and acceptance.

They always taught us to be respectful of other people and just because they didn't have the same beliefs doesn't mean that they were wrong and you were right. Not just tolerate differences, but embrace them. (Mared, Feb. 7, 2008)

Our house was really loving and [my mom] was really loving to all of my friends no matter who they were. And my sister is gay so that counts too. Everybody is really accepting. Yeah. There is lots of that there. I dated a guy who was Jamaican and he came out for lots of visits and stuff and he was always just welcomed as family. (Anika, March 19, 2008)

For Mared, family discourses on respecting the beliefs of others, even if they were not in align with her beliefs, shaped her early understandings of social justice. As well, shaping these early understandings, she suggested that family discourses on difference meant moving from an attitude of tolerance to one of acceptance. Parents intentionally exposing children to a variety of cultural experiences in order to develop understandings of respect and acceptance, was a common theme in the narratives of many participants. Whereas, for Anika, family discourses on acceptance were not so much intentional, as circumstantial (her sister's sexual identity and her boyfriend's racial identity). In her narrative she discussed how her mother modeled a "loving" and "accepting" stance, regarding sexual orientation and race that was significant in shaping her early understandings of social justice as accepting differences. In summary, because family discourses on respecting and accepting differences figured prominently in the narratives of most of the participants, I would suggest that these notions were very significant in shaping general, early understandings of social justice.

In Lian's and Jenna's narratives, they discussed how their understandings of social justice were influenced by a parent's practice of reaching out to help others.

Maybe my dad, he helped the needy. I just remember I always wanted to help others. It is my personality. (Lian, June 16, 2008)

My mom was in healthcare and for her it was really big that everybody had a right to healthcare. I remember so strongly as a kid in fairness and everybody should be entitled to it...everybody deserves a chance to succeed. (Jenna, April 14, 2008)

In Lian's narrative, she discussed how her father's actions and discourses were so influential that helping those less fortunate became an integral aspect of her own identity. Whereas in Jenna's narrative, she spoke about how her mothers' discourse on defending the rights of others was significant in shaping her own understandings of social justice. In both narratives, understanding how privileged social positions can be utilized to support others seemed to be a common theme in family discourses expressed by these, as well as other, participants.

For some participants, such as Meg, family discourses on religion and faith provided them a "Christian worldview" through which they filtered understandings of social justice.

I think they [understandings of social justice] came from church and from having a Christian worldview and from teachings in the bible like Jesus says to care for the least of these and like the children and the orphans and that kind of thing. It's about showing love. So I think that is the big thing for me and I try to combine my Christian beliefs—like the filter that you take everything in through kind of and mesh that together with social justice issues that we talked about. (Meg, Nov. 19, 2007)

Similar to Lian's narrative about family discourses on reaching out to those less fortunate, Meg spoke about how notions of loving and caring came from a family perspective defined by religious beliefs. This Christian perspective of caring and loving others figured prominently in the family discourses of five other participants who spoke about social justice in the context of their religious beliefs.

However, not all participants adopted the practices and discourses of their families. Adelle and Jian were the only two participants who referred to developing

internally persuasive discourses that challenged the authoritative discourses of their families.

Definitely [my understandings of social justice were] not from home. My family, despite the fact that they are really nice and really caring people, they just don't really hold this like global view of, you know, what an equitable society really means and how immigrants really aren't to blame for all of society's problems. (Adelle, April 3, 2008)

My family is very conservative. They come from a very immigrant fearing type of thought—"Things are good, don't make trouble, keep quiet." I have always been a bit of a rebel in my family so I tend to question more. (April 24, 2008)

In examining these two narratives, it was interesting to note the connection between the two family discourses. Adelle felt her parents blamed immigrants *carte blanche* for all of the problems facing society today. Whereas Jian commented on how his parents led a very conservation life so they would not draw attention to themselves as immigrants. In a sense the very fears that most likely influenced Jian's family's discourses, were fears perpetuated by a family discourse of discrimination much like the one expressed by Adelle. Even applied to Jian's and Adelle's narratives on challenging family beliefs, initial authoritative family discourses were influential in propelling them to shape new understandings and internally persuasive discourses.

4.2.1 Discourses on Experiences of Difference

Allard and Santoro (2004) and Harro (2000) argue that we are born into social identities related to categories of difference. Discourses of difference figured prominently in the narratives of those from South Asian (Kiran), Egyptian (Naila), Chinese (Lian and Jian), and Korean (Sun) cultural/ethnic backgrounds. For these participants, personally identifying with issues of difference regarding gender, race, ethnicity and culture further informed their understandings of social justice. The shifting parental roles in a "highly

patriarchal society” were instrumental in shaping Kiran’s current worldviews and beliefs for instance,

I think it is based on personal experience, being part of a minority group, being female in a highly patriarchal society, watching how my mom fit into the role in our family – she is a very strong person...essentially the bread winner, my dad was a stay-at-home dad for a lot of our childhood...we typically associate what he does with moms and the whole nurturing bit. A lot of my understanding comes from just growing up and taking courses. I want to be proud of what I do and help others who are searching for themselves throughout this journey. (Kiran, March 7, 2008)

For Lian, how she viewed herself within a discourse of difference depended on the experiences she was offered.

It [understandings of social justice] evolved in my life. I just remember I always wanted to help others. It is my personality. And then maybe when I was younger I looked darker-skinned than my sisters. So going out with my sisters they would say go hang out with your family because I looked dark like these other people. Go hang out with the aboriginal people, they are your family. I was about 10 years old. A lot of little things like that. (Lian, June 16, 2008)

In her narrative, Lian expressed how her understandings of social justice were shaped, in part, by her early family interactions regarding racial identity. Although she and her sisters were from the same biological family, their taunting led Lian to view herself as somehow different. Consequently, in defining her own racial identity, “I looked dark,” Lian acknowledged that interactions with her sisters influenced her early understandings of herself within a discourse of difference.

In the following narratives, focused on discourses of difference, Naila discussed the complexities particular to those negotiating multiple cultural and racial identities. In these narratives, she presented her experiences as an Egyptian-Canadian Christian traveling to Egypt, and as an Egyptian-Canadian living in Canada.

I was born here...my roots [are in Egypt] but it is not home. I’m not Arab. And so when I go to Egypt I see a different aspect of Egypt because we go and visit like

the 10% Christian minority who has been really, really oppressed for a long time. That is why a lot of our parents have left. So going back I mean they won't necessarily know that I'm Christian and it is more of a factor of like, because I don't cover my head. Which could be because I'm not Muslim, or because I'm a foreigner. But they know I'm Egyptian so I should know better. At least everybody else can just open their passport and say 'Born in Egypt.' I can walk around and look Egyptian and [at the same time] look like a foreigner.

Like even within our community here not being able to read and write Arabic or speak it people are like 'Oh, that Canadian girl.' Clearly like in everyday society people are like 'Oh, she is so exotic looking. Where are you from?' Well if I tell you Canada, you are going to be like 'Well, you know what I mean.' It's like you get that reaction. There is no winning. So that is also another thing that has informed the way I see things because even within a community that I've grown up in, I'm not fully accepted there either because, you know, I'm the Canadian who doesn't speak Arabic. And not because I think I'm better than everyone else. I was just not taught.

In the first narrative, family discourses on faith and religious persecution informed Naila's understandings of social justice. In this excerpt on family visits to Egypt, she discussed the confusion that occurred when others attempted to connect her racial and religious identities. In the second narrative, Naila's comment, "there is no winning" highlighted the challenges she faced as a minority language speaker within her own church community, and as racial/ethnic minority within Canadian society. Much like a foreigner both inside and outside of her country of birth, Naila's narratives suggested that she was compelled to constantly negotiate her identity based on various social locations/identities related to categories of difference (Harro, 2000).

Along with Bakhtin (1981) and Holland et al. (1998), Allard and Santoro (2004) argued that identities are socially constructed and continuously influenced by interactions with others. The narratives of both Lian and Naila demonstrated how cultural, ethnic and racial identities are not only informed not by family discourses, but also by circumstances related to assigned social identities.

Building on notions of difference, Ryan discussed how personal experiences in his youth with the welfare system aided him in becoming more conscious of socializing processes that privilege some and oppress others.

Coming from somewhat of that background myself...going through a system...a welfare system. I guess I have a unique perspective from that background for helping kids coming from that same background and trying to get them up to speed where everybody else is. It sort of seems that [from my experiences with the welfare system], if you were struggling on the straight and narrow, you weren't likely to get support, because you were viewed as on the right path. Yet, if you were heading down that wrong path, like most of the money went to drugs etc. you got support. This is an early example of social justice, or injustice perhaps. (Ryan, May 22, 2007)

In this narrative, Ryan spoke about his experiences with various forms of social inequities. By making a conscious choice to stay “on the straight and narrow,” he was viewed by those assessing his needs as capable enough to survive without additional social support. Because of these early experiences, Ryan was more able comprehend challenges facing children and youth in need of support and guidance.

For all these participants, being born into social categories of difference (Harro, 2000) based on race, ethnicity, gender and socio-economic status, contributed to their understandings of social justice. In identifying with differences, each of these participants might have greater potential for stepping outside of what is considered *normative* to understand issues of discrimination and oppression (Allard & Santoro, 2004). Moreover, because they identified with difference, these participants might be more compelled to find creative ways to resist oppressive discourses by moving out of the centre to make room for those on the margins to come forward (Applebaum, 2002).

4.3 Educational Experiences Informing Understandings of Social Justice

In discussions about educational experiences, the participants outlined a variety of positive and negative factors that shaped their understandings of social justice. Two types of discourses became evident in their narratives as the participants recounted experiences of moving from the figured world (Holland et al., 1998) of family to the figured world of school. The first type of discourse suggested that school experiences reinforced authoritative family discourses, whereas the second one suggested that school experiences conflicted with family discourses.

Attending elementary and/or high schools that were intentionally chosen by parents because of their religious or alternate/political worldviews reinforced family discourses for some of the participants.

I went to a public alternate high school in grade 8 and 9 that was political, especially environmental. There were meeting with kids and teachers about issues around the school. It was a school for kids that found it difficult to fit into regular school. Most of the parents were left-wing and not interested in mainstream. (Hannah, May 29, 2008)

For others, inspirational elementary and high school teachers further solidified, or expanded on past *truths* or understandings of social justice. For these participants, family discourses of acceptance such as, “the music teachers were great because they were very inclusive” (Ana) were reinforced. Whereas, discourses such as, “[my teacher] opened my consciousness about world issues” (Jill) expanded on family discourses on culture, or global issues.

However, in the figured world of elementary and high school, family discourses on care, kindness, open-mindedness, acceptance and understanding appeared to have bumped up against school discourses of discrimination, humiliation and rejection leaving

some of the participants feeling “alone” (Lian), misunderstood, and always “on the fringe” (Beth). For Lian, Ciana and Beth, rather than allowing these discourses to hold a great power over them as adults, they chose to use these negative experiences to challenge the status quo, “that’s when I decided I would never be a teacher like him” (Ciana), to reshape internally persuasive discourses and imagine figured worlds of school where children would feel empowered and included.

Although positive and negative interactions/experiences at elementary and high school influenced participants’ understandings, in a discussion on how curriculum experiences addressed social justice, many of the participants echoed Richard’s interpretation, “I can’t really remember anything in public school of any consequence.” In fact, for many of the participants it wasn’t until they attended college or university that the notion of social justice was introduced into coursework and discussions. For many participants, undergraduate university courses were instrumental in developing a deeper understanding of social justice education or challenging beliefs and worldviews. The most prominent influences came from coursework in women’s studies, criminology/law, humanities, social geography, and in education courses focused on social issues and diversity.

For many of these participants university coursework was their first experience with the notion of social justice and for some, like Anika, it acted as a catalyst propelling them to new internally persuasive discourses and understandings.

Probably women studies classes really required me to look at myself in terms of my location within the race/class/gender influenced power structure of our society. Recognizing both position of privilege as a white, middle-class person and my marginalized position as a woman really got me thinking about the social experiences/struggles/challenges that others in our communities face. (Anika, March 19, 2008)

Researchers argue that preservice teachers need to be challenged to examine their beliefs, as well as their relationships to systems that privilege some while oppressing others (Cross, 2005; Schick & St. Denis, 2005; Sleeter & Grant, 2007). In doing this, they contend, preservice teachers would have a better understanding of the conditions affecting the lives of the students they will teach. By engaging in specific coursework, Anika articulated that she was made aware of her social identity/location and was more aware of discrepancies between the lives of various people. If making a connection to the argument made by the researchers cited above, it could be construed that in examining these issues of identity and oppression, Anika was provided with opportunities that prepared her to better understand the conditions and circumstances affecting the lives of her future students.

Jasmine, also referenced specific coursework as being significant in influencing her understandings about social justice,

Bit and pieces I put together and through the courses I took and the people I talked to. It hasn't changed the way I think entirely, just questioned some of the things I was taught as a child. I took a course in college on religion and existentialism and atheism. Even though I wasn't entirely convinced, it made me really question things and the way people view the world. I do have a few friends who were Catholic and they definitely can't do it anymore. But that is not where I am at. I still believe, but I question a lot more. My personality has changed and who I am has changed. I am stronger about what I can question than I was as a child. (Nov. 12, 2008)

Although the authoritative discourse of her family was challenged through engaging in a specific course, Jasmine articulated that she still felt her own personal beliefs were not changed. By interacting with new perspectives and beliefs that were different from her family discourse, she began to question more and develop her own opinions that she could articulate as an adult. This tension between authoritative discourse and internally

persuasive discourse is what Bakhtin (1981) viewed as critical in shaping identity in a process he referred to as “human coming-to-consciousness” (pp. 424-425). By referring to her personality as being changed, but her beliefs still intact, Jasmine was in essence engaging the tensions between authoritative and internally persuasive discourses.

In exploring the tensions that existed between school and family discourses, as suggested by Bakhtin (1981) and Holland et al. (1998), a greater potential for developing new internally persuasive understandings of social justice could be made possible. As a result, in analyzing participant narratives overall, it appeared that whether their own personal discourses were in-line with or in conflict with family discourses, educational experiences further expanded their understandings of social justice.

4.4 Sociocultural Affiliations Informing Understandings of Social Justice

Pedagogical (Allard and Santoro, 2004; 2006) and philosophical researchers (Applebaum, 2002, Levinson, 1999; Rice, 2002), along with sociocultural theorists (Bakhtin, 1981; Holland et al., 1998), contended that our identities are socially constructed and constantly influenced by interactions and social locations. These researchers argued that through choosing specific sociocultural affiliations, we open opportunities for decentering from our social positions, which in turn allows other voices and perspectives to come forward.

As with their previous discourses on cultural/ethnic identity, Kiran and Sun, along with Naila, felt that affiliations with particular cultural communities, in the context of school, continued to define their discourses on social justice.

In elementary and high school, I feel that being part of the South Asian community has helped shape my understanding of social justice. I went to two different schools that had two different feels. At one school, I felt like I mixed

with a variety of people and the second high school, I felt more pulled towards the South Asian community. (Kiran, March 7, 2008)

I was in the French Immersion program and the thing with that was we were all very multicultural and diverse and it wasn't until later that we started to notice that groups didn't always form that way. Come high school the neighborhoods were definitely very different... Like we noticed the discrepancies and like groups just started forming. So all the Spanish kids would hang out together and all the black kids and all the Asian kids and, as a minority myself but being Egyptian, there was no one group to be in so I always thought that was a very strange thing. So it was more the social aspect of school that informed a lot of my knowledge of social justice. We were the floaters. Like we would get along with everybody and you would attempt to get along with everybody but didn't necessarily have to stick with one group. (Naila, April 17, 2008)

Where Kiran (and Sun) commented on identifying with specific cultural/social groups with the same cultural backgrounds, Naila spoke about affiliations with a variety of cultural groups. Naila's experience in high school as a "floater... [I] would get along with everybody but didn't necessarily have to stick with one group" (April 17, 2008), demonstrated how she was able to creatively negotiate different cultural roles as they seemed appropriate. This narrative on sociocultural affiliations is closely connected to Naila's previous discourse on difference where she discussed the complexities in negotiating her multiple cultural identities. Rather than feeling defined by one particular cultural affiliation, "as a minority myself, but being Egyptian, there was no one group to be in" (April, 17, 2008), she improvised on the cultural resources and positions offered to her at school. In doing this, she adopted a creative and open worldview where she constantly adapted and redefined her social and cultural identity.

Culturally and ethnically varied sociocultural affiliations in diverse school communities also figured prominently in the discourses of many of the Caucasian participants such as, "I went to school with lots of East Indian kids and lots of First Nations... [I] have a little bit more broad an understanding" (Meg). Building on family

discourses of open-mindedness and acceptance, these participants felt social interactions with others different from themselves provided opportunities to reinforce those understandings as articulated by Richard, “my two best friends growing up in elementary school [were] Chinese-Canadian and Caribbean-Canadian and that [made] absolutely no difference to me” (Nov. 8, 2007). Interacting with others who are different from us, suggested Harro (2000), could open up opportunities for new possibilities (such as breaking oppressive cycles of socialization) to emerge.

Adelle spoke about the socioeconomic differences prevalent in her school experiences that impacted her understandings of social justice.

Well actually when I think about it the elementary school I went to which is actually six blocks up the street was sort of like here and if you lived on that side you were pretty much—Well most were new immigrants to the country or didn’t speak English or were quite poor but if you lived on this side of the school you were generally white, middle class and lived in a big house so it was very stratified. And when I look back I notice that everyone’s friends were all mostly on the same side of the school. And it’s interesting ‘cause there is no way like someone told us like you can’t play with those people—It is interesting how that just happened. Like I don’t know if kids make connections or they just see people that live similar to them or if they can pick up on socioeconomic status without having to be told it necessarily. And then I went to another school for French Immersion and then it was—like mostly they were all from [a school] which is like the really wealthy area and so then my family was just straddling the middle class line whereas like they are all in big houses. (Adelle, April 3, 2008)

In this narrative, she shared how moving schools placed her in a new social location and assigned her a new social identity. According to Applebaum (2002) and Rice (2002), by engaging with different perspectives and decentering from a dominant group position, those such as Adelle demonstrated, were provided with an opportunity to challenge their beliefs, values and worldview.

Shifting perspectives requires first an awareness of our beliefs, values and worldviews, especially as they are related to social locations and privileged positions

(Allard & Santoro, 2004; Levinson, 1999; Applebaum, 2001; Harro, 2000; Rice, 2002).

All the participants noted that interactions with classmates and friends who were culturally, racially or ethnically different from them increased their awareness of alternate beliefs and added to their understandings of social justice. However, in their discourses on sociocultural affiliations, few participants spoke about the *implications* of their own privileged social positions. This could indicate that they had not pursued further opportunities to deconstruct and examine their own privileged positions. Consequently, these particular participants accepted their social positions as “normative”.

The notion of heightened awareness followed most of the participants into their adult relationships and interactions. As adults, socio-cultural affiliations through travel and friendships with people who were different than them provided opportunities for many of the participants to develop a greater appreciation for different beliefs, understandings and worldviews. However, the notion of shifting perspectives and examining privileged cultural/social positions discussed by researchers (Allard & Santoro, 2004; Causey et al., 2000; Kagan, 1992), was only prevalent when a few of the participants discussed specific opportunities that caused them to pause and reflect. In this “coming-to-consciousness” (Bakhtin, 1981, pp. 424-425) these participants engaged in the struggle between authoritative and internally persuasive discourses. This struggle was evident in the conversations about: travel experiences (Tobin); living and working internationally (Richard); and friendships with socially conscious people (Anika).

After canvassing for Green Peace I backpacked through South America for six months just traveling and seeing—I think getting a grasp on other cultures. It helps you put perspectives on your culture and then too just learning about how the people live and why they live the way they live. Like in Bolivia seeing sort of that dichotomy sort of between the haves and the have-nots. And so, you know, traveling through it and seeing it firsthand—It’s hard to understand the transfer of

wealth that occurs between Northern and Southern hemispheres. And so I think that is a large part for me about social justice and thinking locally acting and globally and the ecology side of things but also in human rights, right, because it also contributes to a lot of the way that people are treated and working conditions. (Tobin, April 21, 2008)

That was the first time in my life I really, really felt discrimination and sometimes racism to be 29 for the first time feel racism as xenophobia, it was a shock and I had a tough time dealing with it. Just being the center of attention at all times...everywhere you go, everything you do, everything you say, everything you wear it is just scrutinized to the Nth degree and you can feel eyes on you all the time. I'm from Vancouver, born and raised and I think that makes a big difference being surrounded by so many cultures and people that are new to the country or new Canadians. I think I've had a pretty good patience for language barriers and cultural barriers and cultural misunderstandings. But now, I mean I have all the patience in the world because the shoe has been on the other foot. So, I don't think it has changed my mindset but I think now I can certainly have empathy instead of just sympathy for it because I've lived it. Like I said, I've experienced racism and discrimination and everything for the first time in my life, which being a white male didn't really happen up until then. [But] it also went the other way. I could literally get away with murder, I'm sure. And any sort of gaff I could have pulled—intentional or not—'Oh, that's okay he's foreign'. We were afforded a lot of things. (Richard, Nov. 8, 2007)

Researchers argued that engaging in experiences that force one to examine one's own perspectives and privileged cultural/social positions was necessary to shifting beliefs and perspectives (Allard & Santoro, 2004; Causey et al., 2000; Kagan, 1992). Richard's and Tobin's narratives highlighted how, when placed in situations where they stepped out of their comfort zones, their beliefs were challenged and personal growth was made possible. Moreover, even though they previously articulated that they came from fairly liberal-minded and politically conscious families, only when they situated themselves in these international settings, did they truly realize and understand issues of difference, oppression and discrimination.

For Anika, choosing to consciously live outside of her prescribed social norms assisted her in better understanding the lives of those who live on the margins of society.

Well I would have to say—I mean I grew up in [this particular suburban community] which is very White. Like I said there was no questions really even brought up through like my high school and stuff like that. It was just kind of accepted as White is the norm and that was just the way it was. Anything else was kind of marginalized. But my group of friends was kind of always a little outside of that just kind of in terms of—you know—we were maybe the tattooed kind of misfit types that were kind of not really fitting into the social norms that were expected of us especially growing up in a small town. When I moved to Vancouver I moved to East Van and of course that is a very diverse little community there and, you know, a lot of my friends are gay and thinking about the cultural dynamics of my friends though—They tend to really be White which is interesting. Yeah, but still very, very socially conscious. So my friends have always been conscious and with kind of feminist issues as well as cultural and issues of race and stuff like that. (Anika, March 19, 2008)

Applebaum's (2001) argument that we do not need to blindly accept the attitudes and social norms assigned to us was evident in Anika's discourse. By rejecting these norms, Anika demonstrated the creative capacity to shift her socio-cultural affiliations and open possibilities for new understandings to emerge. In addition to the discourses on examining social location, Anika's narrative demonstrated Allard's and Santoro's (2004) argument, that in order to initiate a shift in beliefs and understandings, one needs to be able to step outside of the centre and see how collective experiences operate on the margins.

4.5 Work and Volunteer Experiences Informing Understandings of Social Justice

For Liz (previously a volunteer for a women's crisis line), continuing to work as a volunteer at a transition house for women escaping violent relationships had kept her focused on issues of social justice. For Richard, Ryan, Halle (previously employed as Youth Workers), Jada and Jenna (previously employed as Special Education Assistants), work experiences prior to teaching were instrumental in shaping their understandings that "everybody has a right to an education no matter where they came from [or] who they

were” (Jenna). And, as articulated again by Ryan, personally identifying with issues of social justice, “coming from somewhat of that background myself I have a unique perspective” had always drawn him to work involving “helping kids coming from that same background.”

[As a] Youth Worker, [I] developed my understandings [of social justice that] got me connected with school system. I worked with kids on fringe...kids who didn't have a voice, or anyone to speak up for them to provide things for them, or get them get what they needed. More of an education through doing for me. I guess, the have nots are the ones always striving for things that everyone else takes for granted. (Ryan, May 22, 2007)

Anika, Ciana, Adelle, Halle and Ana discussed how volunteering in a variety of school settings to prepare for their teacher education program broadened their understandings social justice.

One of the schools I volunteered in, I helped out in the classroom but I also helped by pulling certain kids out. And the kids that I worked with--there was one in particular--and he was low socioeconomic status, a lot of different issues, he came from a broken home—And so seeing him—So it was just really interesting to me to try and at least understand these kids as individuals which obviously is something you have to do but it just really hit home for me. (Ana, Feb. 14, 2008)

In these discourses on work and volunteer experiences, participants' understandings of oppression, whereby not all people have equal opportunities and that the needs and interests of some are empowered while the needs and interests of others are devalued, supported definitions of social justice presented by a number of researchers (Adams, 2000; Harro, 2000; Kumashiro et al. 2004; Sleeter & Grant, 2007; Young, 2000). Furthermore, through varied experiences working with those in different social locations, some participants appeared to have developed an increased awareness of their own privileged positions. Applebaum (2002) argued that developing such awareness was

a first step toward resisting dominant attitudes and beliefs that reinforce injustices and inequities.

4.6 Teacher Education Program Informing Understandings of Social Justice

In previous sections, I examined how the participants negotiated their personal identities through discourses on family, sociocultural affiliations and school experiences (elementary, high school and undergraduate university coursework). Although this section continues to explore educational experiences, the narrative excerpts analyzed here relate more precisely to how participants shaped their professional identities in educational communities of practice (Wenger, 1998). Since the participants in this study had participated in a particular teacher education program, their teacher identities were constructed through social relationships, interactions and membership in an educational community focused on shared discourse and experience around issues of social justice.

Although many of the participants commented on the significance of their undergraduate coursework in shaping their understandings of social justice, many felt that the notion of social justice was more of an implicit “perspective” (Lian). For the majority of these participants it was not until they entered their teacher education program that the notion of social justice was made explicit, as articulated by Jill,

Very much. It was sort of the whole intent of the module I think. I have to say a lot through PDP [understandings of social justice were shaped] obviously because our module did explore it a lot. (Jill, Feb. 2, 2008)

Over half of the participants felt that they were already fairly “socially aware” (Raine) and conscious of issues of social justice. However, they felt that the teacher education module focus on social justice gave them “an extra little push” (Emily) by

bringing it more “to consciousness” (Beth) and encouraging them to incorporate social justice into their practice.

I think when I was in PDP [teacher education program] I didn’t hear anything that I said, “Whoa that is something I’ve never thought of before”...there probably were a couple of things. But, by and large, I was just randomly placed in that module and it was probably the best place for me to be because it didn’t bring anything new to me but resonated with things I had known. It didn’t alter anything, it just solidified my own perspective. (Ryan, May 22, 2007)

So for me, it wasn’t a whole lot of reflecting and then changing who I was but it was getting a vocabulary to talk about what I thought was right anyway and bring it more to consciousness...I felt like it gave me permission to do what I would have liked to do but I don’t know that I would have felt that permission if I had taken a more maybe middle of the road module. (Beth, Nov. 1, 2007)

So for participants, such as Raine, Emily, Ryan and Beth, teacher education intervention, such as proposed by Darling-Hammond (2000), served to further solidify previously held discourses on social justice. However, for many others, like Elyse, participation in a teacher education module focused on social justice allowed them to constantly examine their beliefs and practices and become aware of their teaching roles.

But my whole experience it was constantly challenging your beliefs and anything that you, you know, sort of put forward there would always be questions and so it helped you to either think about your philosophy and recognize that yes, this is truly something you believe in and help you to sort of come to a better realization of why or to say “Wait a minute, why do I feel this way?” and “No, I don’t think I feel that way after all.” (Elyse, May 10, 2008)

For these participants, examining their beliefs helped them further develop their understandings and philosophies social justice education. By “constantly challenging” beliefs, they engaged in the tensions that allowed them to develop internally persuasive discourses (Bakhtin, 1981).

Although the content in their teacher education program did not *challenge* their beliefs, Kiran, Liz, Jenna, Jasmine, Ana and Anika cited interactions with other

classmates with “different views [and] diverse ideas and philosophies” (Liz, May 8, 2008) as challenging. This was clearly articulated by Ana,

So the program itself—that didn’t challenge my beliefs but I think other people’s beliefs may have and obviously I didn’t have the same beliefs as everybody else. It was very interesting to engage in conversation with people—Other people who were going into teaching, other people who were teachers who were all working supposedly towards the same goal. (Ana, Feb. 14, 2008)

Rice (2000) argued that interacting with dissonant perspectives, such as articulated by Ana, potentially offers opportunities and new possibilities for moral agency. However, she contended that moral agency was not contingent on adopting the perspectives of another. Rather, much like the process described by sociocultural theorists (Bakhtin, 1981; Holland et al., 1998), it was through engaging in differing discourses and then reflecting on how these interact with our own beliefs and perceptions, possibilities for moral agency become apparent. It could be argued then, that through interactions with classmates, these participants were provided new opportunities for moral agency.

For Jian, participating in a teacher education module focused on social justice, challenged him to be more aware of his role in teaching for social change.

I mean the thing that is good about our module was how much more aware I could be in aiding change. Change is out there, change will happen around us, but change isn’t perceived by a lot of people—Change is not wanted by a lot of people. But, again, if you are able to show options to empower, to have that person gain some knowledge to make good citizens on their own, change then will happen and that is one thing I took from PDP. (Jian, April 24, 2008)

Educational researchers proposed that preservice teachers needed to become more aware of the significance of their roles in implementing social change (Casey, 1993; hooks, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Thiessen et al. 1996). By participating in a module focused on social justice, Jian’s reflection demonstrated that teacher education could be a site for initiating social change.

Most of the participants discussed how by participating in a program focused on social justice they were able to explore curriculum alternatives that were empowering and relevant to the diverse students they planned to teach (Casey, 1993; hooks, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Thiessen et al. 1996). As Elle articulated, *coming to consciousness* about differences meant she hoped to teach from a perspective that honoured the needs of her students.

I'm definitely more aware of it. I learned there is more than curriculum that you need to be aware of. Before I thought...you teach math and you teach L.A. and you don't really have to consider the background of your students or where they are coming from. Your students and their home life affects their learning so much...that was the biggest eye opener for me. (Elle, Jan. 7, 2008)

As argued by researchers, developing professional identities requires that prospective teachers must first become aware of their beliefs, understandings, worldviews, social locations and orientations (Dei, 1996; Causey et al., 2000; Haberman, 1991, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Sleeter, 1993). And then it is essential for preservice teachers to observe how their understandings, beliefs, orientations, locations and worldviews become the lenses through which they teach (Cochran-Smith and Zeichner, 2005; Delpit, 1995; Palmer, 1998; Sleeter & Grant, 2007; Zeichner, 1996, 2003). To provide a forum for exploring this *coming-to-consciousness*, Darling-Hammond (2000) pointed to the importance of “powerful teacher education intervention” (p. 171). So regardless of whether or not they felt they were already socially aware, participants' discourses on teacher education experiences suggested that all of them felt that participation in a community of practice focused on social justice provided them with an opportunity to further examine their beliefs, worldviews, orientations, understandings and

teaching roles. Moreover, their discourses demonstrated that this experience encouraged them to explore curriculum and teaching practice in new ways.

4.7 Defining Social Justice and Social Responsibility

In analyzing the participants' definitions of social justice, social responsibility, and *teaching* for social justice, two types of discourses emerged. The first type of discourse, centred on the notion of recognizing differences, defined social justice as respect, understanding, care and acceptance. The second type of discourse more specifically expressed an understanding of social hierarchy, defined social justice as oppression rooted in inequality among individuals, groups and systems.

Embedded in participants' definitions in the first type of discourse were authoritative family discourses of non-judgment, acceptance and respect. As well as family discourses, participants, such as Anika and Ana spoke about accepting differences in their discourses on sociocultural affiliations, volunteer, and educational experiences. These notions of respecting and accepting differences came through in their definitions of social justice.

I guess just a recognition and a valuing of different experiences and different perspectives and different people. Like just—I don't think that—if there was a term 'being difference blind' and I don't think that is the answer. Not that I don't think there is a common thread between all of us, but I think that we need to recognize and value the difference between us and not kind of just gloss over them or say everybody is the same and that is that. So I guess social justice is just a recognition that the differences kind of among us should be valued and not seen as kind of deficits or negative or just put a value on them. You know? (Anika, March 19, 2008)

I view it as how you treat people and how you regard other people from different cultures, from different faiths, from different ethnicities and how you treat them and how you work together, how you live together in society. Because everyone sort of has at least this very basic respect for life and respect for other people and I think social justice is supposed to be that. (Ana, Feb. 14, 2008)

Closely braided with the notion of acceptance, some participants commented that social justice was based in caring for others. In one example, Meg's definition of social justice as caring for others was reminiscent of the narrative excerpt presented earlier in which she recounted how family discourses on Christianity taught her to reach out to those in need.

I think social justice is about caring for people who don't have a voice in society or who can't care for themselves. How about being fair—I think being fair but with a lot of grace. I think social justice is about caring for people as best as you can and extending grace and understanding for them as a person. (Meg, Nov. 19, 2007)

In her discourse on family, Liz expressed that her “mother is a very caring person.” Then as she moved through her life, coursework in women's studies and volunteer work at a crisis centre, along with sociocultural affiliations with “a lot of different friends that have different religious backgrounds or views,” Liz had come to define social justice as “understanding”.

I would say—like if I had to choose one word—understanding. It's like understanding the way that different types of people work and where they come from. It doesn't just have to be their culture. It can be their religion or their learning styles. I think social justice is just getting to know someone and treating that person fairly. Treating everybody with the same respect and not making judgments. So being accepting, understanding, not making judgments on people and being open-minded, I think. (Liz, May 8, 2008)

In analyzing this first type of discourse, it was evident that for many of the participants, understanding, respecting and accepting others were critical elements in defining social justice. These notions of “tolerance and respect for the ideas and beliefs of others” were also identified in the BC Government performance standards for social responsibility (2001). Although these participants had all engaged with the language of social *justice* at the university level during preservice and practicing teaching

experiences, as new practicing teachers they had chosen to adopt the language and understanding of social *responsibility* pervasive in BC school cultures, which contrasts with the former perspective, as indicated in Chapter Two. However, aspects of their definitions could also be *loosely* connected to researchers' definitions such as culturally relevant teaching (Ladson-Billings, 1994) and teaching for diversity (Zeichner, 1993).

However, in the second type of discourse, an understanding that social justice was connected to the notion of oppression, whereby not all people are afforded equal opportunities (Adams, 2000; Harro, 2000, Kumashiro, 2000, Pincus, 2000; Young, 2000) figured prominently. In Adelle's discourse on family, she articulated that her understandings of social justice "definitely [did] not come from home" and that her family did not "hold a global view of what an equitable society really means". In her definition below, it was evident that throughout her life she had grappled with the authoritative discourses of her family to create an internally persuasive discourse where she was willing to examine her own social location and privilege.

I'd define [social justice] like it's an awareness that the world is not equitable and people are not always treated fairly and to understand social justice you need to look at yourself in relation to the world and see what you can do to make it better. (Adelle, April 3, 2008)

As well, Tobin's discourses on educational experiences (studies on sustainability), and sociocultural affiliations (through travel) "sort of seeing that dichotomy between the haves and have-nots." These understandings contributed to a definition of social justice that suggested closer examination of privilege on a global scale.

I think that to me the social justice is understanding entitlement and recognizing sort of equality within life and for people and that it is grasping sort of the nuances within society that create equality or inequality and being able to also use that knowledge to recognize the situation you are in or the situation that is around

you or that, you know, makes up the world that we're part of. (Tobin, April 22, 2008)

Sleeter and Grant (2007) proposed the notion of multicultural social justice education focused on the elimination of oppression of one group by another. For Lian, family discourses on difference as well as on caring for those less fortunate, coupled with challenging educational experiences could have contributed to her definition of social justice as “equality”.

It just means...the first word that comes to me is equality. To erase inequality, that gap, marginalization. (Lian, June 16, 2008)

Jenna, Jasmine and Naila further expanded on this definition of equality by including anti-oppressive education and human rights. In discourses on family, Jenna spoke about her mother defending the rights of others and then again in her discourse on work experiences as a Special Education Assistant, she spoke about “everybody having a right to an education.” These discourses highlighting defending rights was again articulated in her definition of social justice.

Social justice is just everybody has a right – a right to the same laws, right to the same education, right to the same things. (Jenna, April 14, 2008)

For Naila, family discourses on respecting and supporting those who have been “pushed down” by society, along with discourses on difference appeared to have informed her definition of social justice.

When I think of social justice I think to the lines of stereotyping and racism and individuality but I think it encompasses even more than that. Like social justice is poverty as well. It's just dealing with everybody. Like not just fair but like everyone is human and everyone deserves the right to be respected for who they are. Like everybody's circumstances are different so we are going to work with everybody based on whatever their circumstances are, right. (Naila, April 17, 2008)

Ryan, Naila and Mared all expressed notions of social justice that moved beyond individual circumstances to acknowledging the greater systemic inequities that impacted individuals and communities (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Harro, 2000; Sleeter & Grant, 2007; Kumashiro et al., 2004). Ryan's family discourses on personal experiences with government social systems clearly figure prominently in his definition of social justice,

I hesitate to use the word equal because equal is not fair. Everybody not offered the same opportunities, but the chance at success, or something like that I guess. Just opening up students' ideas or thoughts to the possibility that some of what these people are experiencing is not their own fault, but because of a system that is not set up to help them. (May 22, 2007)

In recognizing social inequalities in relation to their own social locations Jasmine's, Naila's, Lian's, Adelle's and Tobin's understandings of social justice are in keeping with Harro's (2000) definition of social hierarchy.

Much like Freire's (1970) view of schools as sites for liberation, a number of these new teachers viewed teaching *for* social justice as teaching practice aimed at initiating change. In their discourses on family, both Liz and Raine referenced political family discussions as being instrumental in their understandings of social justice. Again, this notion of teaching as a political practice was highlighted in their definitions of teaching *for* social justice.

Okay, using teaching as a tool for social justice because we are in an authoritative position as a teacher and I think it is so important that we model social justice and I don't mean just using unit plans on multicultural week, but teaching it through the way that we relate to different students, the way that we see different parts of the world. (Liz, May 8, 2008)

Well, those in authority. Like as a teacher I have the opportunity in my classroom to make sure that everybody has a voice, right. If you are a teacher and you are teaching about social justice and you can sort of help them try to create change whether it be scaffolding or mentored to create change, then they will remember that they can actually change something and that might help them in the future. I think because education is political—It always ends up going back to politics

some way. And then it is just a matter of saying “You know, well even if you can’t create change in some areas, always vote for someone who will create change.” (Raine, Aug. 10, 2007)

In this second type of discourse, participants’ definitions of social justice as more action oriented in addressing social and systemic inequities, oppression, human rights, and discrimination related more closely to researchers’ interpretations of issues of domination and subordination (Adams, 2000; Harro, 2000; Cochran-Smith, 2007; D’Souza et al., 2007; Freire, 1970; Sleeter & Grant, 2007) and anti-oppressive education (Kumashiro, 2000). Furthermore, in reference to teaching *for* social justice, this second type of discourse correlated with Cochran-Smith’s (2007) notion of teaching against the grain, Ladson-Billing’s (1994) idea of culturally relevant teaching practice, and D’Souza et al.’s (2007) proposal that specific teaching practices that empowered students served to improve the life chances of all children.

4.7.1 Connecting Social Justice and Social Responsibility

Although commonly referenced at the university level, as noted in the literature review, the term social justice is relatively new to practicing teachers in BC. More prevalent in BC schools are discourses on social responsibility. Therefore, as the participants moved from the figured world of university and their roles as students, to the figured world of schools and their new roles as teachers, they also moved from the language of social justice to the more commonly used language of social responsibility. As a result, it became obvious that in my analysis I would need to address this issue. Moving between the world of university and the world of school was clearly articulated in Halle’s interview experience when applying to teach in BC schools,

So I came to my interview [for a teaching position] with the social justice perspectives and they really switched me over to social responsibility and saying it is kind of synonymous. (Nov. 26, 2007)

To discover whether or not participants felt the two notions truly were synonymous, they were asked to reflect on their understandings of social responsibility in relation to their understandings of social justice. Many of the participants felt that although subtly different, social justice and social responsibility, “essentially go hand-in-hand” (Ciana). Naila argued that this was obvious because “a kid who is socially responsible is socially just”. Although somewhat connected, Ryan, Mared and Elyse, suggested that social responsibility was an understanding that stemmed from the larger overarching notion of social justice.

I guess I cluster them. When I think social justice I think social responsibility. It could almost be like social justice is the bigger sort of umbrella term and than social responsibility would be, you know, like a little parachute after that because social justice includes so much to me. (Elyse, Nov. 10, 2008)

For a number of the participants, social justice implied purposeful and political action, whereas social responsibility implied a *softer*, more passive approach. This understanding supported criticisms of social justice as being too “touchy-feely” or too focused on self-esteem building activities (Shakman et al., 2007). Furthermore, as argued by Schick and St. Denis (2005), social justice as it is currently enacted in Canada simply perpetuates a “not racist [Canadian] national self-image” (p. 308). These critiques, particularly when comparing social justice with the BC interpretation of social responsibility, were clearly evident in the discourses of a number of these new teachers such as Adelle,

Well, I see social responsibility seems like it should be really powerful but it sort of plays out—like do they cleanup after themselves, do they take care of their backpacks—which is not really what I feel social responsibility is so I guess it

really depends on how it is defined. Like what does being kind in a socially responsibly way really mean? I think it gets really dumbed down the way it's used in elementary schools. (April 3, 2008)

The notion that social justice “has a bit more of an actionable or political connotation” (Richard) supported Freire’s (1970; 1998) argument that we must move from a place of ideology to actually putting ideas into practice. Freire’s theory about praxis insisted that we must critically question and examine our own abilities and inabilities to take action. In her discourse, Kiran clearly outlined similar arguments suggesting that social responsibility was more passive and individual, and that social justice was more politically inclined and action-oriented.

For me, social justice seems like more of an action approach. There are some pillars involved with it that strongly resonate with me...one being anti-racist issues, discrimination, gender, inclusion...really respecting a person from within, getting to the core of the person, rather than just the tip of the iceberg. I think social responsibility is about cognizance, it's about your place in the community, what you can do to spread some kindness, and do good service, and do good civil duty, and be a good person. So that's what I think the difference is between social justice and social responsibility. Social responsibility is kind thinking. Social justice is action and hard-hitting and deep thinking. (Kiran, March 7, 2008)

Again, these participant excerpts and discourses correlated with researchers’ definitions articulated in the previous section. However, in analyzing the participants’ discourses on social justice and social responsibility, it was evident that interpretations of what social justice means, specifically in the context of education, remain confusing and complex.

4.8 Chapter Summary

In this chapter I presented an interpretive montage that analyzed participants’ narratives in the context of discourses on social justice informed by family, education, work/volunteer experiences, teacher preparation and sociocultural affiliations. Through analysis, I demonstrated that authoritative family discourses were instrumental in shaping

participants' initial understandings of social justice. Then throughout the course of their lives, participants' interactions with new discourses assisted them in shaping new understandings and internally persuasive discourses (Bakhtin, 1981). In this chapter, I also outlined participants' definitions of social justice and social responsibility and demonstrated how these definitions were connected to discourses on social justice evolving from family, education, work/volunteer experiences, teacher preparation and sociocultural affiliations.

Through creating this interpretive montage I have presented participant narratives that will become a backdrop for analyzing data in Chapter Five. In Chapter Five I will draw on narratives and discourses presented in this chapter to develop a more complete picture of participant experiences as they grapple with the context of teaching and share visions of the future.

CHAPTER 5

SOCIAL JUSTICE IN THE CONTEXT OF TEACHING

To better understand how new teachers construct their discourse on social justice, in Chapter Four I used the metaphor of a montage to describe the production and analysis of participants' narratives as they were constructed in relation to family, education, teacher preparation, work and volunteer experiences, and sociocultural affiliations. Building on the notion that "we teach who we are" (Palmer, 1998, pp.1-2) and that our beliefs inform our actions and pedagogy (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005; Delpit, 1988), this chapter presents a montage of new teachers' discourse on social justice in their current teaching context that was created against the backdrop of their previous discourses outlined in Chapter Four.

5.1 Chapter Outline

In the first part of this chapter, I present participants' discourse on grappling with social justice issues in the context of teaching. Their narratives spoke to dichotomies of encouragement and discouragement, success and challenge, confidence and uncertainty. Discourses in this first section focused on the preparation of new teachers, curriculum development/implementation and factors that encourage or discourage them from incorporating social justice into their practice. Participants were also invited to share their opinions on what factors they thought influenced a teacher's ability to act as a social justice educator/agent of social change. Participants also discussed new teachers' and veteran teachers' abilities to teach social justice.

In the second part of the chapter I present participants' perspectives on what should be done to better support new teachers once they have left university programs to begin their careers. In this discussion participants discussed bridging gaps between teacher education programs and beginning teaching experiences, the benefits and challenges of structured mentoring programs, support through professional development and resources. In the final section of this chapter, I analyze participants' prospective visions on how they would like to see social justice education incorporated into schools and communities in the future.

5.2 Becoming a Social Justice Educator/Agent of Social Change

Teachers acting as agents of social change have been defined in the literature as those who act consciously to eliminate cycles of oppression by teaching outside the mainstream (Casey, 1993; hooks, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Shakman et al., 2007; Thiessen et al., 1996). Some participants (Emily, Adelle, Liz, Anika, Jasmine and Mared) indicated that to become an agent of social change a teacher must "be passionate" (Jasmine, Nov. 12, 2008), or must "treat [social justice education] with high regard" so that the students she teaches "will make it important too" (Mared, Feb. 7, 2008). Whereas others suggested such teachers needed to have a "certain level of awareness and reflective capacity" (Sandra, Nov. 15, 2007, Beth, Jada, Sun and Halle). Some participants (Meg, Raine and Mared), thought that becoming an agent of social change was also about a willingness to take risks and step out of one's comfort zone.

I think you have to be pushing something that you really believe in—that you believe strongly—to come in with eyes that are willing to see the good things that are there and the room for positive change and then you just can suggest 'Well, what about this?' or 'Give this a try' and just kind of be willing to give something a try. Just kind of be brave and try something new. (Meg, Nov. 19, 2007)

In her work, Ladson-Billings (1994) had similarly observed that teachers who found the courage and confidence to step out of the mainstream protocol were more able to create innovative, relevant experiences to meet the needs of their students. In this same vein, Raine (Aug. 10, 2007) argued, that feeling a bit of discomfort or dissonance should not deter new teachers from jumping in and taking risks: “I think if you are not a little uncomfortable you are lying to yourself”. Raine’s comment is noteworthy according to Levine-Rasky’s (2001) signpost, whereby a social reconstructionist teacher demonstrates a willingness to explore tensions. Moreover, as Kagan (1992) argues, to grow in new ways, teachers need to engage in discourses and situations that unsettle their beliefs.

For some participants possessing a disposition of passion toward social justice education was necessary for teachers acting as agents of social change.

I’m very passionate about it that I would think if there is something that is inhibiting me I would have to find a way around it because that is how important social justice is in my classroom. (Liz, May 8, 2008)

The dispositions of teaching from a place of passion and awareness, while actively seeking out social justice experiences, coincide with what Casey (1993) observed to be dispositions in teachers who acted as agents of social change.

Some participants (Emily, Jenna, Elle and Jian), suggested that teachers acting as agents of social change actively sought out social justice experiences and professional development. For Emily, acting consciously to transform education meant taking responsibility for becoming informed.

Well I guess knowledge, right. Like if you don’t know about it, then you can’t really teach what you don’t know kind of thing. And so just finding ways to learn about it. I don’t think you have to grow up around that. Just somewhere along the lines someone taking the time to just kind of show you and I think sometimes

teachers or people aren't aware and they just need to tell them that they need to become aware. Just kind of that exposure along the way. (Emily, May 29, 2007)

In addition, Kiran, Ryan, Beth and Naila discussed how through personal experiences they were able to identify with injustices. This was evident in Kiran's reflection on connecting to the lives of her students.

Personal experience is definitely going to colour the way you think about everything. I can't talk about everybody, but I can talk about myself. I always want to relate things to how I experienced it and weigh them. There is this experience that I had when I was young and how does that fit into how my students are dealing with some issues now. If I can connect with it, I can talk about it. I just think that it might be easier and you might feel that you want to do it and you might feel willing to do it because of your personal experience. But I think everyone can teach it...everyone can find something inside themselves. (Kiran, March 7, 2008)

Collectively, the participants' discourse on teachers acting as agents of social changed focused on dispositions of passion, risk-taking, open-mindedness and reflective capacity. As well, they suggested that such a teacher must possess a desire to increase awareness by learning about social justice, view social justice as a priority and be willing to accept some discomfort. The dispositions expressed by the participants appeared to parallel some of Levine-Rasky's (2001), "signposts" for identifying a social reconstructionist educator, such as valuing critical pedagogy and possessing a desire to learn about educational inequalities, demonstrating a willingness to explore tensions and personally identifying with inequity or injustices.

Although most participants were able to identify with some, or all, of these dispositions, others acknowledged that this was not always easy: "for the most part if you haven't had the experiences, if you are still relatively closed off to the world, I don't think you would be ready to see the messages" (Jian, April, 24, 2008). Ryan's discourse

on teachers as agents of social change added to this the discussion on predispositions by highlighting the complexities of shifting beliefs.

I don't know if you can take someone who is not necessarily inclined that way to begin with then give them all the information and have them be that way. I think there has to be some kind of interest or experience. I think once they come to teacher education and are becoming a teacher that would most likely already be part of who they are... I guess I am saying there would have to be some sort of predisposition to being that way to begin with...there still has to be something about their own thinking and their own basic value system. Someone who is not inclined to think that way I don't know how much they would change [Even if they were in module on social justice]. (Ryan, May 22, 2007)

Jian's and Ryan's reflections support Causey et al.'s (2000) argument about the tenacity with which teachers cling to prior knowledge. However, even if challenging, researchers (Banks, 2001; Brown, 2004; Causey et al., 2000; Kagan, 1992) suggest that opportunities still must be provided for preservice teachers to examine their beliefs and worldviews in order to initiate a change in behaviour and practice. In discussing factors that encourage teachers to become agents of social change, Richard and Elyse commented on the how they believed strongly that teacher education programs focused on social justice provided such opportunities.

I've talked to a couple of people who went to [a different university] and explaining what we did in our module—Staggering to them that we would explore those kinds of issues because there they are very focused on pedagogy and that kind of thing. So I think where you do your teacher training—with who you do your teaching training. I had free reign and carte blanche [during my teacher education program] to do a lot of social justice things. (Richard, Nov. 8, 2007)

Richard's excerpt parallels teacher education researchers (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Delpit, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Sleeter & Grant, 2007) argument that social justice must be an integral component to teacher education programs.

Overall, participants spoke of the dispositions similar to those presented by various researchers (Casey, 1993; hooks, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Levine-Rasky,

2001; Shakman et al., 2007; Thiessen et al., 1994). However, they also acknowledged that for those “not necessarily inclined” (Ryan) or “closed off” (Jian) shifting previously held beliefs would be more challenging. This suggests that, although possible, becoming an agent of social change/social justice educator is a complex process. It also implies that to become an agent of change, a teacher must not only have a strong desire to teach from a social justice perspective but be willing to accept the dissonance accompanying such a stance – dissonance many of these participants were unable, or afraid of engaging with. Therefore, in the next sections, participants reflect on these complexities and the implementation challenges facing new teachers while sharing narrative accounts on incorporating social justice into their teaching practice.

5.3 Social Justice Education for New and Experienced Teachers

In their research, Casey (1993), Ladson-Billings (1994), Levine-Rasky (2001) and Thiessen et al. (1996), discuss the experiences and dispositions of teachers who act as agents of social change. Although they examine teaching practices, their research did not specify whether or not teaching *experience* was a factor in determining teachers’ abilities to become agents of social change. I decided to explore this in my research and asked participants whether or not they thought teaching experience was a factor in determining how successfully a teacher was able to incorporate social justice into her practice. In this section, because the discourses reference specific professional experiences, I situate the participants as classroom teachers (enrolling teachers), learning support or music teachers (non-enrolling teachers), adult educators, or Teachers-On-Call (TOCs). As well, when relevant, I specify in what particular school/teaching environments (e.g., international, private/independent schools, etc.) participants work.

Ana and Jill (TOCs), like Mared (a classroom teacher), all thought that a more experienced teacher would find it easier to implement new initiatives or take risks.

Like I struggle playing too much with the curriculum because I am a new teacher. And I think it is easier for veteran teachers not do things that aren't necessarily in the prescribed learning outcomes but can pull in certain things and not just having that kind of experience. I feel like I'll get it eventually and I'll be able to do that in a couple of years. Now it is kind of I have to stick to the—I gotta get this stuff done and you feel a little bit more pressured to stick to the curriculum. (Mared, Feb. 2, 2008)

Although Jada (a support teacher), Liz (a TOC), Adelle, Halle and Naila (all classroom teachers) acknowledged that teaching experience offered a certain level of credibility and freedom, they questioned, as did Jian (a classroom teacher), whether this was a strong determining factor in whether a teacher became a social justice educator.

From my personal point of view the more seasoned teachers here have their preconceptions and it is biasing the practices here. Some of these teachers have been here for 20-30 years and they come from a different era and they are not willing to change their ideology, their philosophy, their actions in how they teach. They get a very, very stagnant style of teaching, right. So they have to cover the curriculum and they have to do that. It is boring for them. (Jian, April 24, 2008)

Jenna, Elyse, Kiran (all TOCs), Jasmine (a classroom teacher), and Meg (a music teacher), commented that they felt that it was not simply a matter of years of teaching experience that determined whether a teacher became a social justice educator, but it was a matter of personal beliefs, worldviews, life experiences and personal conviction.

I think it depends on the teacher to be honest—And personality and their belief system. I think a new teacher comes in with fresh ideas but I think a teacher who has been practicing a long time knows how to reach the students maybe more effectively in certain ways so I think that is a really hard question. But I also know teachers who have been around for a long time and they are scared of taking that jump, right. And then I have a friend who has been teaching for like 15 years and she loves doing that kind of stuff, right. So that is why it is really based on the individual. (Jenna, April 14, 2008)

An analysis of their discourses made evident that most felt that experience was not necessarily a factor in determining whether or not a teacher became an agent of social change/social justice educator. In fact, it appeared that personal and professional dispositions (e.g., the courage to take risks, or possessing a passion for social justice) were more likely to be determining factors. These discourses on new teachers versus veteran teachers' abilities to incorporate social justice into their practice are in keeping with what researchers have to say about dispositions to become social justice educators (Casey, 1993; hooks, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Levine-Rasky, 2001; Shakman et al., 2007; Thiessen et al., 1994). However, it could also be argued that in stating their views on this topic, some participants spoke from a more idealistic perspective rather than from personal experiences with teaching social justice. Applying Clandinin's and Connelly's (1995) theory, it could be argued that these particular participants were enacting a "cover story" of competence to mask their own uncertainties. In the next section, I present excerpts that illustrate how these new teachers described factors that encourage and discourage them from incorporating social justice into their teaching practice.

5.4 Implementing Social Justice

When they were members of a particular teacher education program focused on social justice, all of the participants were encouraged to explore ways of incorporating social justice into their teaching. In the first section I examine participants' narratives on the types of social justice or social responsibility experiences they have created for their students. In this examination, I make connections to previous discourses on family, education, volunteer and work experiences, and sociocultural affiliations, and demonstrate how these provide a backdrop to the types of experiences participants create

for their students. In the second section, I examine how once working as certified teachers, maintaining a social justice stance, or teaching for social justice appeared, at times, to be complicated and challenging for many of the participants. In this section I highlight themes of encouragement and discouragement, success and challenge, and confidence and uncertainty.

5.4.1 Current Practices and Curriculum Experiences

My analysis revealed that some the participants' discourses approached more of a social justice stance as outlined by researchers (Adams, 2000; Cochran-Smith, 2004; D'Souza et al, 2007; Ladson-Billings, 1994). In this stance, participants often deviated from the prescribed curriculum to create relevant learning opportunities such as inviting students to engage in discussions about potentially controversial topics. Other participants' discourses suggested that some leaned toward more of a social responsibility stance, largely in keeping with the BC performance standards. In taking this stance, participants created learning experiences related to themes such as self-esteem and community building activities, anti-bullying activities, caring for each other. However, separating social justice and social responsibility into two distinct teaching stances was not always clear and obvious. In Chapter Four, participants' perspectives and definitions of social justice varied as some felt that the two terms were synonymous while others felt they were distinct and unique. Acknowledging these discrepant definitions, and drawing on researchers' definitions of social justice (Adams, 2000; Cochran-Smith, 2001; D'Souza et al., 2007; Harro, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Kumashiro, 2000; Sleeter & Grant, 2007) and social responsibility (Government of British Columbia, 2001), I loosely

categorize participant narratives into those who taught from a social justice stance and those who taught from a social responsibility stance.

In Chapter Four, Ryan, Naila, Beth (all classroom teachers), Raine (teaching in an international school in China) and Lian (a TOC), all revealed that having varied life experiences and/or challenges had helped them to better understand social justice education, or at the very least, granted them a level of “credibility” (Naila). For these new teachers, capitalizing on teachable moments was essential to how they viewed and taught from a social justice stance in their classrooms.

Then there are the little things that you hear in the hallway or in your classroom. Like “that’s gay”. Well hold on what’s gay, what’s gay really mean? And other comments, like “that’s Jew, or so and so gypped me”. Those little things come up in a classroom all the time, and to say to a kid, you know what Jewed means, or why do you think that might be offensive to some people. Nine times out of ten they don’t know where it came from or what it means. (Ryan, May 22, 2007)

I’m a first year teacher and I talk about religions in my class. I’m just like ‘But this is my kids’ experiences. Am I to ignore their own experiences?’ It doesn’t make any sense. People are just like ‘You tell your kids you are Christian?’ I’m like ‘Sure, because if they know I’m Egyptian why shouldn’t they also know I’m Christian?’ I know that they are Fijian/Muslim or whatever. You know what I mean? Like why shouldn’t they know that about me? There are no taboo topics. Christianity shouldn’t be a taboo topic. If we should speak openly about race or speak openly about anything else, why can’t we speak openly about religion? This is multicultural Canada, give me a break. And like in a school like this, seriously, I sit in some of my reading groups with an aboriginal student, some Muslim students and some Punjabi students and Christian and so we are all sitting there and we can have some religious talks because we just talk about it openly. (Naila, April 17, 2008)

As well, my observations of the material organizations of both Ryan and Naila’s classroom and some of their student work samples confirmed that teaching from a social justice was a priority for these two teachers. Ryan shared student projects with me such as pamphlets they had created on anti-harassment and response journals connected to a novel on an Aboriginal author’s experience with residential schooling. Naila shared a

variety of children's books on social justice, which she used to engage her students in discussions on topics of race, ethnicity, religion, racism, stereotypes and discrimination.

Researchers describe this as an ability to engage with differing, and at times unsettling, perspectives (Causey et al., 2000; Kagan, 1992; Rice, 2002). Each of these participants felt comfortable engaging students in deep discussions and did not shy away from potentially controversial topics. This fits with Applebaum's (2002) notion that we can resist scripts that perpetuate dominant group attitudes and beliefs that reinforce social injustices and inequities. So perhaps for these participants, being able to resist such scripts was contingent on their personal life experiences and discourses on difference.

Although Halle, Jasmine and Emily (classroom teachers) did not adopt discourses on difference, they did discuss the importance of possessing dispositions of awareness and passion to become a social justice educator. Also, as we saw in Chapter Four, they defined social justice as "being treated fairly" (Halle) and that "every person and group [is] entitled to equal rights and opportunities" (Nov. 12, 2008). In their narratives on teaching from a social justice stance, they referred to opening dialogue with their students about potentially controversial, or complex issues. They believed that engaging students in activities and discussions about current news or world events was an effective way to develop a greater sense of social justice in their students. For example, in the following excerpt on acting as agents of social change, Emily identified the disposition of awareness as being critical for teaching social justice. As well, in her narrative on teaching for social justice, she acknowledged her authoritative role as a teacher and felt compelled to ensure that in her classroom "everyone has a voice [and] is given an equal opportunity...to speak out about issues" (May 29, 2007. Teaching from a social justice

stance, this notion of providing a voice for her students was clearly articulated in Emily's recounting of a poignant lesson she facilitated on social pressures.

We were talking and one of the groups did a little thing about Virginia Tech and it was obviously a very serious conversation. I talked a little bit about—It was kind of neat how it all fit together—We talked a bit about peer pressure and then what society says we should be and how like images and magazines and stuff—The guys have to be strong and they have to have lots of money and all the bling, and stuff and so we were just like—Again, trying to connect it all here—Like what if the person who had done Virginia Tech was someone who felt very much like an outsider. Like he was angry at the rich and that is what he had written. Kind of upset about his situation and his poverty and we just said, you know, like obviously he had to make a choice. I found like it is a good connection with social studies, right, 'cause we were talking about government and the different levels of government and so we were talking about this issue of who is responsible for this? How do they work together to make sure that this doesn't happen? (Emily, May 29, 2007)

Jasmine's narrative also referenced notions of engaging students with issues of social justice.

We do a lot of debating about issues of human rights and children's rights. This gives kids a voice and helps kids develop their identities and beliefs. [Myself and another teacher] chose five Grade 6 and 7 kids who were really vocal and interested in human rights to attend a conference with us on a just society. (Jasmine, Nov. 12, 2008)

Researchers' (D'Souza's et al., 2007; Shakman et al, 2007) definition of teaching for social justice included a commitment to pedagogy that nurtured critical thinking and invited varied perspectives. By teaching students through debate and discussion about issues of social justice, Emily and Jasmine were offering their students opportunities to engage with such varied perspectives and worldviews that could potentially further shape their identities and discourses.

In Chapter Four, Tobin (a classroom teacher) defined social justice as,

understanding entitlement and recognizing the nuances within society that create equality or inequality and being able to use that knowledge to recognize the

situation you are in or the situation that is around you makes up the world that we're part of. (April 21, 2008)

This definition was reflected in his experiences as a classroom teacher in which he grappled with his own identity and social location while trying to make meaningful connections to his predominantly First Nations students living in an isolated, rural environment. For him, as a Caucasian middle-class male, stepping out of his comfort zone and engaging with cultural experiences and discourses that were unfamiliar was, at times, challenging. However, in an effort to better connect with his students and their life situations, he stated that he often deviated from the curriculum and found ways to immerse himself and his students in relevant cultural experiences. Building on such cultural experiences, he expressed an interest in having his students collect stories and design short films that featured the lives of the people living in the community.

Like they had a healing service for residential schools and the high school was invited and so I called up and asked if we could come too because we are going to start the government—I was thinking it might be nice to start with the apology because they have just gotten the apology. So we went down to the service and it was really cool. I even got to partake in it which I thought was really neat—pretty bizarre too—but for me it was quite a surreal experience but for them it was also the first time that they got to sit through something like that and they got to be included. (Tobin, April 21, 2008)

In applying Applebaum's (2001) notion of resisting scripts tied to beliefs and meanings to an analysis of Tobin's narrative, it appears that by consciously thinking about creating relevant experiences for his students, Tobin was able to teach from a social justice stance by shifting away from authoritative, prescriptive curriculum to open up spaces for new possibilities. Furthermore, in making connections to Rice's (2002) work, it appeared that Tobin's experiences in engaging with differing, and at times possibly unsettling perspectives, offered him potential for exploring broader views.

As indicated earlier, Raine, Ryan, Naila, Mared and Emily (all classroom teachers) argued that having a passion for social justice, or viewing social justice as a priority were dispositions possessed by teachers who acted as agents of social change. These dispositions, along with “risk-taking”, were reflected in the participants’ narratives on how they found creative ways to infuse social justice into the mandated curriculum.

And that I think one of the things that I have been realizing is that the curriculums, the IRPs are very broad and you can just pretty much teach whatever you want. [Social justice] will always fit in with these IRPs! If you are doing a little writing, if you are doing a little drawing, school—There you go! (Raine, Aug. 10, 2007)

As TOCs, support, or classroom teachers, many participants found ways to incorporate social justice into their practice through the literature they chose to introduce as articulated by Lian (June 16, 2008), “I have my multiculturalism books. All my books are about social justice. So I always read those”. Like Jada (June 10, 2008), many participants used literature to “start conversations about social justice issues [and to] broaden the kids’ experiences.”

Although referring to social justice, I would suggest that the following participant discourses more closely correspond to notions of social responsibility as outlined in the BC performance standards (2001).

Classroom teachers, like Richard (Nov. 8, 2007), believed that social justice was about “breaking down barriers [and] social equality,” citing conflict resolution activities “We’ve done a little bit on bullying” as an important aspect of teaching social justice to their students. Or Beth (Nov.1, 2007), who defined social justice as, “learning to be a human being who is respectful of oneself as well as of others,” had created a “peace table” where students worked together to solve problems. Still other participants

discussed how, as classroom teachers, or TOCs, teaching social justice meant creating a community of care and acceptance through self-esteem building activities and by working hard to accommodate all the learners in their classrooms.

In Chapter Four, the following participants defined social justice as “caring for people” (Meg), “understanding [and] acceptance” (Liz), “respect” (Ana), and “valuing differences” (Anika). These participants often discussed how notions of social justice were simply embedded in their everyday practice.

I find that a lot of the things that I do in the classroom I know myself are social justice but I can't define them because everything that we do in the classroom from the minute I greet every child at the door until when they leave, I feel like we are doing things to make the children feel accepted and wanted and special. (Liz, May 8, 2008)

In examining the participants' discourses on their classroom experiences, it is apparent that they had found a variety of ways to infuse what they perceived as social justice into their curriculum and practice. It appears then, that the types of activities or experiences the participants were able to create for their students largely depended on their individual beliefs, social locations and personal dispositions, as well as their perceptions and interpretations of social justice and social responsibility. This analysis supports how other researchers (Coville-Hall, 1995; Delpit, 1988; Palmer, 1998; Wiest, 1998) understand teachers' beliefs, values and worldviews and understandings to inform teaching practice. However, the extent to which participants are able to create social justice experiences for their students is not solely dependent on their perceptions of social justice. As I will present in the next section, participants' discourses cite external conditions and experiences specific to new teachers that either encourage or discourage them from incorporating social justice into their practice.

5.4.2 Discourses of Encouragement and Discouragement

Many of the participants overwhelmingly agreed that the most significant factors encouraging new teachers' abilities to incorporate social justice into their practice were support, professional respect, and the freedom to explore new ways of teaching. For many, working with a supportive, encouraging staff (or at least one staff member) and administrator was instrumental in their continued development as social justice educators.

Whatever's best for kids and gets kids thinking and opens up opportunities for learning, she's [the administrator] all for it. (Ryan, May 22, 2007)

I think the sky would be the limit here in terms of bringing that here. I can't say I would run up to any opposition here. (Richard, Nov. 8, 2007)

As Ryan and Richard indicated, in these communities of practice, the veteran teachers and/or administrators valued the insights of new teachers and conversely, the new teachers acknowledged the wisdom and experience of the veteran teachers and/or administrators. Although members in these particular communities of practice may not necessarily share common ideals, the veteran teachers appeared to be willing to make space for new teachers' discourses and practices to emerge. According to Wenger (1998), in combining the experiential knowledge of the veteran members with the fresh insights of the new members, a type of community of practice has more opportunities to evolve in innovative ways. Moreover, Clandinin and Connelly (1995) suggest that such collaborative and collegial practices provide more opportunities for critical, transformative practice. In this same vein, new teachers suggested that supportive and encouraging relationships were beneficial in creating an atmosphere conducive to taking risks.

But [she] [teacher Liz is replacing] and I have had such great communication with each other and I have made sure to talk with her that our relationship has encouraged me to be able to do things. So I don't feel like I'm in a classroom that is not my own even though I'm going to be giving it back because I think that the community of this school has been accepting like right from when I had my interview. (Liz, May 8, 2008)

However, this was not the case for all the participants in this study. While staff and administrative support was forthcoming for some, a number of these new teachers suggested that feeling scrutinized – e.g., “you feel that you are being evaluated every day” (Jian, April 24, 2008), or under “pressure” (Sun, Dec. 6, 2007) to perform – hindered their abilities to explore social justice in their practice. As Wenger (1998) indicates, in communities of practice feelings or perceptions of incompetence could potentially leave new members fearful of taking risks. The following discourses highlighted the overwhelming need for acceptance as a “newcomer” in a community of practice.

Many participants (Jill, Jian, Richard, Kiran and Sun) noted that they were uncertain about bringing social justice into their practice because doing so might affect future employment possibilities. Again, like so many others of these new teachers, feelings of incompetence, whether grounded or not, surfaced in Jill's discourse.

I think for me anyway—I don't want to speak for everyone—but I feel like I don't know anything. I just—It's not to say I feel unprepared or anything but it is just it's a constant learning curve—You are afraid to mess up, you know. Your future jobs are riding on the impressions you make and it's just kind of like there is a certain drive to play it safe. (Jill, Feb. 2, 2008)

As well, these participants indicated that, as new teachers, they often abandoned their own beliefs and steered away from contributing to controversial conversations in favour of silence and maintaining the status quo. Cognizant of their status within the staff, they often chose to establish an identity of compliance as a way of further securing a sense of

inclusion within the community of practice. These fears of being marginalized were clearly stated by Richard (a classroom teacher),

I keep my mouth shut here. Conversations among colleagues—I hear a lot of—‘cause I don’t agree with and sometimes are offensive things said by teachers who should in my mind know better. Rocking the boat, right. I mean there is a time and a place and that is difficult. It is difficult to come to a teacher whose got tenure or been here for that long and say like ‘That was kind of an offensive or insensitive thing to say.’ They are going to come back to you ‘Well who are you?’ You’ve got to test the waters first too, yeah. Tread lightly, yeah. Yeah. And you can’t *burn* your bridges and you gotta choose your battles too. (Nov. 8, 2008)

Interestingly, Richard was a participant who felt strongly about social justice, cited family political debates and discussions about world issues, and had lived abroad where his beliefs and worldviews were challenged. Yet in the narrative cited above, he talked about wanting to keep a low profile by not challenging his colleagues in debates or discussions that might be perceived as controversial. So although he demonstrated many dispositions indicative of a social justice educator and noted that he worked in a supportive environment, in reality he struggled to bring social justice into this professional setting.

A strong desire to be accepted and included extended beyond the staff to encompass the wider community (including students and parents). Fears of offending parents or influencing the beliefs of their students by engaging them in activities or discussions about social justice were evident in the discourses of Elle, Halle, Meg, Emily, Jasmine (classroom teachers), Hannah (an adult educator), Ana (a learning support teacher) and Lian (a TOC). Such uncertainties figured prominently in the discourses of Lian and Ana.

One book, I was really reluctant to bring it in. it was about different kids of families...same sex parents. I sometimes fear that the children are going to go to

their parents and say my teacher is teaching about same sex families. I went to a workshop at the district and they said they would back anyone who taught about same sex marriage. (Lian, June 16, 2008)

Well, because like I said, my beliefs might be very different from the family [the children] grew up in or, you know, the religious aspect. It is just that—Especially in elementary school, you know, the kids are more vulnerable. That even if you open up discussion so that anybody could say whatever they wanted, the fact that you are the authority figure if something—people might come back to talk to you. If a student says it, “Yeah, but that is not how Miss so and so or Mr. so and so taught us” I don’t want them to go home and be—on us that this and this and this is true and if you believe that then that means they [the parents] are wrong. (Ana, Feb. 14, 2008)

The desire to be accepted by, or to please their students often determined the types of activities and teaching practices some of the participants chose to implement. When teaching about topics of social justice, student responses such as, “oh this is lame” (Meg), or “I just get these stares” (Tobin, April 21, 2008), or “their eyes roll” (Jian, April 24, 2008) discouraged some participants from taking further risks in their practice. In examining these excerpts, it appears that these new teachers felt uncertain about how to effectively address these challenges.

Applying Clandinin’s and Connelly’s (1995) and Wenger’s (1998) notions of belonging within a community, it became apparent in my analysis of the data that for these new teachers establishing themselves as respected and accepted members within a variety of communities (e.g. school staff, parent, classroom) was most critical in determining how, or what, they taught at this point in their careers. Without a collaborative and supportive community, coupled with a strong desire to teach from a social justice perspective, innovative and transformative practice was not likely to occur. This discourse of discouragement was in stark contrast to the discourse of encouragement presented previously, where participants spoke about how they felt more able to take

risks and implement innovative practices as valued members of a supportive school community.

Although acceptance figured prominently in the discourses of these participants, curriculum and job assignment constraints were also viewed as factors discouraging many participants from exploring social justice in their practice. While almost all of the participants were searching for full-time work, many of them had minimal control over the type of job they were granted, let alone having input into the grade, subject, or school in which they were placed. In fact, some eventually chose to work overseas or in private school settings in order to obtain full-time employment as classroom teachers. Keeping these challenges in mind, participants' discussions about employment complexities were analyzed using Clandinin and Connelly's (1995) argument that teachers often do not work in isolation, nor do they work in settings solely of their own choosing. Working in a variety of grades/schools, participants like Ciana, who were employed as Teachers-On-Call, found it most challenging to implement ideas and curriculum about social justice.

It's kind of tough because you're only there for a day, but in the classes I've been in for more than a day, you get a lot of, "That's not how we do it!" and I try to explain to them that I'm going to be there for a while and to try my way out. It's really hard because you are like a guest. I TOCed for a while and you just try to go in there and make the day run as smoothly as possible. You might not be able to teach the way that you really want. (Ciana, Jan. 26, 2008)

Working part-time in job-share situations was often common for new teachers. For those participants, sharing a classroom with another teacher often meant that they felt as though they had less freedom to explore their own ideas. Comments such as, "I've been working off of the other teacher's yearly plans" (Halle, Nov. 26, 2007), "it is still her class" (Liz, May 8, 2008), and "I feel like a guest" (Sandra, Nov. 15, 2007), indicated that these teachers felt constrained by their teaching situation. This feeling of being

constrained, or obligated to comply with the pedagogy, or plans of other teachers was echoed by Jada (a learning support teacher) and Meg (a music teacher). As non-enrolling teachers, these participants found implementing their own ideas challenging because they either had “little short chunks of time” (Meg, Nov. 19, 2007), or “because I am a non-enrolling teacher. [Enrolling teachers] set the program and I support it” (Jada, June 10, 2008).

In addition, Richard (currently a teacher in a private school for children with designated learning disabilities) and Tobin (a teacher in a predominantly First Nations, rural community) indicated that meeting the unique needs of their students determined what they taught.

So it is a really wide range. They are absolutely delightful kids. They have a lot of character. There is a very high unemployment rate in this area and often I think too it is a lot of the sort of the families that—The low education within the communities. So I mean a lot of times you really have to just step back and try to really put it in perspective. They are used to self-monitoring and self-supervising and being raised by other siblings and other children. Yeah. And just amazingly strong. So every once in a while I have to just remind myself that they are children. (Tobin, April 21, 2008)

But as a new teacher those aren't always what is on your plate, right. Like right now it's about how to teach kids with all these special learning challenges, right. They are 10 incredibly different kids with 10 incredibly different abilities and challenges. (Richard, Nov. 8, 2007)

Specifically, referring to teaching about issues of social justice, Richard also commented,

Well, with my kids it is a concept that they wouldn't be able to grasp. It's over their head. We can talk about respect and we can talk about bullying and a very elementary concept of social justice but anything on a global scale like a universal social justice would just be far beyond the realm of understanding. (Nov. 8, 2007)

Clearly, these excerpts speak to the employment complexities and challenges faced by new teachers working with diverse student populations in a variety of school settings. For those participants working in part-time, or casual situations, securing a sense

of belonging and membership in a school community is further exacerbated.

Acknowledging the social aspects of teaching (Clandinin and Connelly, 1995), new teachers working within this type of employment structure may experience isolation and marginalization rather than collaboration and inclusion.

However, regardless of teaching assignment, many of the participants found curriculum constraints to be one of the most limiting areas in terms of infusing social justice into their practice. For Ana, Richard, Ryan, Adelle, Halle, Mared, Jian (all classroom teachers), Elyse and Sun (TOCs), meeting the demands of the Ministry mandated curriculum posed challenges when trying to incorporate new ideas about social justice.

Well the kindergarten curriculum really doesn't include anything I'd really think of as social justice, though they might call it that. But it is like social awareness with the curriculum. The curriculum is not even supporting social justice learning in kindergarten. (Adelle, April 3, 2008)

And now I have to cram for the FSAs. So I mean it is easy to work the social justice in with the language arts for practicing for the writing and I know the Fall [reading assessment] DART that we did I would say had a bit of the social justice theme. And so I'm still having a hard enough time fitting in fine arts, social studies and science and not neglecting those subjects while covering all the math projects I have to cover and then there is the new math curriculum and the new math textbook. It is very difficult—the seven level. (Halle, Nov. 26, 2007)

Yeah. Well I just have Grade 12 Geography. So a big pressure year. It is and they are wanting to know their marks all the time—Very conscientious of scholarship—It's hard for them. That ends up being the most pressure transferred to me basically. (Mared, Feb. 7, 2008)

This illustrates the point made by Clandinin and Connelly (1995) about information such as pre-published curriculum materials that carry the weight of authority, which is funneled into *professional knowledge landscapes* (e.g. schools), by the “conduit” (e.g., government ministries, district policies). The materials that enter into the schools, they

argued, carries a certain value-laden, moral orientation that leaves little room for divergent, or critical pedagogy. Participants in my study recounted how they felt overwhelmed by curriculum demands and felt constrained in their teaching practices. According to them, the barrage of information entering into the teaching landscape, coupled with challenging, diverse classroom settings and little control of teaching assignments, constrains them and keeps them from exploring and engaging students in initiatives such as social justice. However, while acknowledging the challenges and constraints facing these new teachers, it could also be argued that many of them found a multitude of reasons to justify why they were unable to incorporate social justice into their teaching practice.

5.5 Support, Induction and Mentorship

In this section, participant narratives around mentorship and induction were analyzed using researchers' notions of building supportive communities where new and experienced teachers collaborated to develop engaging and innovative practices (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995; Kardos & Johnson, 2007; Wang et al., 2008; Wenger, 1998). In a discussion on mentorship, Wang et al. argued that new teachers often left teacher preparation programs only to find that the ideas and pedagogy presented were not always in-line with existing school cultures. Like Clandinin and Connelly, these researchers agreed that, in an attempt to fit in, new teachers often abandoned preservice practices in favour of those of presented in the school in which they were employed. Furthermore argued Wang et al. and Kardos and Johnson, some structured mentorship programs were not always useful in stimulating innovative and progressive practices. Kardos and Johnson, suggested that to be successful, mentorship programs must be

school-based integrated professional cultures where all staff member share a collective responsibility for mentoring new teachers.

In this first discourse, participants highlighted the necessity for bridging gaps between teacher education programs and spoke about new teacher experiences working in the field. In the second discourse, participants offered insight into the realities and complexities of new teacher support and mentorship.

5.5.1 *Bridging Gaps*

Participants discussed what support they perceived new teachers needed as they began their careers. Ryan, Halle and Adelle all believed that there was a gap between their teacher education program and their first years of teaching. They all talked about how, unless they were “still [continuously] engaged” (Adelle, April 3, 2008) in discussions and work around social justice, they would find it difficult to maintain a focus on social justice pedagogy.

I need to focus on it more. That’s all. You are my friendly reminder. That’s what we all need. We need Rhonda coming to visit once every six months or so! [Just to ask] ‘How are you weaving this in?’ (Halle, Nov. 26, 2007)

Likewise, Clandinin and Connelly (1995) suggested that there are few places for teachers to share their professional experiences. They argued that in order for transformative practice to emerge, teachers needed places to engage in conversations with others. Although Ryan, Adelle and Halle may indeed have places to share stories, their discourses indicated that once out teaching, finding places where they can engage in conversations about social justice were few and far between. Several researchers (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Freire, 1970; Sleeter & Grant, 2007) have argued that new teachers are more vulnerable to being influenced by the pedagogy of a particular

community of practice when they do not have opportunities to engage in transformative, critical discourses. Moreover, in letting understandings and knowledge “go by the wayside” (Adelle, April 3, 2008) might indicate, that through induction, some new teachers could be adjusting their pedagogy away from social justice.

5.5.2 Support and Mentorship

In a previous section, I illustrated how participants pinpointed working with a supportive staff and the wider community as one of the key elements in encouraging new teachers to take risks to explore new practices around social justice. While discussing what needed to be implemented in the future to better support new teachers in teaching social justice, several participants (Tobin, Anika, Jill, Kiran, Jasmine and Jill) cited a strong school and community as an essential element. Although having a supportive staff and administration was significant to all the participants, it appeared to be especially poignant for those who moved from school to school as TOCs.

And I think that’s huge. You know, if you are in a school that feeling of community and cooperation and respect should permeate everything. Then you can do all these things. But if you are in a school where you just feel alone, you know, if the staff doesn’t even greet you in the morning you don’t feel comfortable pooling resources or anything with them and that leads to frustration, maybe even apathy about what’s going on. Yes, I would feel like I needed support...I would need the go ahead [to teach about social justice] from someone. I don’t think I’d feel safe just to be like ‘I’m the teacher, so this is what I want to do and I’m going to do it.’ (Jill, Feb. 2, 2008)

As suggested by Clandinin and Connelly (1995), without supportive, safe places to discuss their uncertainties, new teachers could feel compelled to retell stories, or enact experiences, that showed them to be competent and confident professionals, as clearly articulated by Jill. The danger in this is that by hiding under a veil of competence, new

teachers could potentially miss out on opportunities for professional growth that could transform their practice (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995).

Hannah (an adult educator), Anika (on leave), Jill, Sun (TOCs), Jian and Ryan (classroom teachers) all discussed the need for school districts to initiate mentorship programs in order to support new teachers.

A mentorship program so they don't feel completely alone. Someone to talk to without coming across as being inadequate and worrying about whether or not what they say will affect them getting a job next year. You can talk to them about how to incorporate curriculum ideas...to bounce ideas off one another. (Hannah, May 29, 2008)

Wenger (1998) claimed that in communities of practice, newcomers often found themselves isolated and feeling incompetent unless they were embraced by the experienced, veteran members. In both the excerpts above, participants spoke about needing supportive environments where they felt free to discuss challenges (Hannah, May 29, 2008; Jill, Feb. 2, 2008).

Participant narratives suggested the need for adequate support and mentorship. However, researchers cautioned that, although important, the effectiveness of structured mentorship programs is contingent on how such programs are perceived and implemented by various stakeholders (Kardos & Johnson, 2007; Wang et al., 2008). The following, and at times contradictory, participant discourses on mentorship programs highlighted the complexities articulated by educational researchers.

Although many new classroom teachers, like Jian, discussed the importance of mentorship, they often were unaware of whether or not such programs existed in their school districts, "To tell you the truth, I don't know. If there is one, I was never told about it nor offered it" (April 24, 2008). Moreover, if they did have access to such

programs, new teachers often chose not to participate for various reasons. For example, Beth, with a busy schedule as a mother and new teacher, “trying to get everything up and running and then adding another step [attending mentorship meetings], that could be burdensome” (Nov. 1, 2008). Or Adelle, who had access to a mentorship program but was reluctant to attend sessions, “I always say I’m not going to these things and then when I get dragged to them, I always enjoy them” (April 3, 2008). Or, for others such as Kiran (a TOC), Sandra and Jenna (working in term positions), district mentorship programs were not available to new teachers who were not full-time classroom, or support teachers.

In reality, most often participants in this study found it more beneficial to seek out their own mentors. As suggested by Jada, “I have a good network of people at my school who have the same philosophy...I found my own mentors” (June 10, 2008). Interestingly, in his discussion, Tobin suggested that because the many of the staff members were new teachers like himself, they were “all sort of going through the same thing, which is kind of nice, but we don’t all have a lot of answers” (April 21, 2008). If mentorship was about pairing new teachers with veteran teachers, as Kardos and Johnson (2007) and Wang et al. (2008) have suggested, then Tobin’s situation raises an important point about mentorship challenges unique to some school settings.

Naila noted that networking with like-minded educators through professional development could lead to informal mentorship relationships.

You know what ends up happening sometimes though, which is a little bit frustrating, is that it is the teachers who already have that frame of mind that will seek out that networking. So like for me there is a Pro D coming up and one of them is on Kenya and I’m going to go to that. (Naila, April 17, 2008)

This notion of connecting with like-minded teachers supports Cochran-Smith's (2004) idea of teachers to find strength to work against the grain as agents of social change. However, even though Naila felt professional development was a good forum for connecting with like-minded teachers, she commented that it was not necessarily those teachers who needed to explore social justice perspectives who attended.

Wang et al. (2008) argued that not all structured mentoring relationships supported reform-minded teaching practices and that the quality of the mentorship was often dependent on the dispositions of the mentor. They also suggested that informally connecting and collaborating with other professionals holding similar perspectives and practices could be very-well be a more enriching and positive experience. However, they expressed a note of caution about connecting with "like-minded" people. Naila's frustration that not all teachers seek out transformative experiences highlights that mentorship relationships might simply perpetuate "like-minded" practices that are far from transformative for both the teachers and students. Furthermore, even if transformative mentors were assigned to new teachers, Wang et al. pointed out that research has yet to determine if discourses introduced through mentorship programs actually affected new teachers' beliefs and practices.

Richard thought that regardless of whether or not mentorship programs were offered, in the end it was ultimately "up to a professional to take the responsibility to reinforce [professional development around social justice] and make it a priority" (Nov. 8, 2007). As Raine noted, "I think it is a matter of taking your learning into your own hands; the options are there for people who want to take them" (Aug. 10, 2007). In their discussions, these two participants, who in previous discourses identified themselves as

already predisposed toward teaching social justice, underscored the need for new teachers to be more self-initiating. Moreover, as Wang et al. (2008) pointed out, those who developed strong dispositions toward collaboration in their teacher education programs were more likely to maintain this collaborative spirit once out in the field. Glaringly absent from all the participants' discourses on support, were references to well-developed, structured, district initiated, school focused, collaborative mentorship relationships as recommended by researchers (Kardos & Johnson, 2007; Wang et. al, 2008). Moreover, even though participants suggested that mentorship was important, most made a conscious choice not to investigate programs offered in their school districts. This might suggest that mentorship programs as they are currently offered in school districts in British Columbia are not meeting the diverse needs of new teachers. It also speaks to Clandinin and Connelly's (1995) concerns that new teachers often are isolated and have few places where they feel safe enough to share their challenges. Perhaps by consciously choosing to not investigate or participate in mentorship programs, these new teachers were attempting to hide from their colleagues their feelings of uncertainty.

5.5.3 Support Through Professional Development and Resources

Beyond mentorship, many participants discussed the need for professional development opportunities and resources for new teachers wanting to further expand their knowledge and practice of social justice education.

A lot of the Pro D that we do is based on curriculum, which is great, but I think a lot more should be also on the social justice side. So having Pro D workshops that aren't necessarily science-based or math-based or have the two intertwined and not as two separate things. (Liz, May 8, 2008)

Lack of resources might well be an issue. Just not having the right kinds of books. You know, if you want to do, you know, weave social justice issues or social responsibility issues in with your language arts curriculum, does your school have class sets or half class sets? Have people got together and worked out, you know, learning sequences because it is pretty hard to do all your learning sequences all by yourself. You know, it gets overwhelming. (Beth, Nov. 1, 2007)

This call for professional development opportunities demonstrates how new teachers continue to require support and encouragement in their beginning years as professionals (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995; Wang et al., 2008). And although it was ultimately up to the teacher's discretion, as argued by Raine and Richard, to determine the kinds of resources she used in her practice, lack of resources on issues of social justice (especially from a Canadian perspective), noted Naila (April 17, 2008), became "a matter of having that [resource] to pick up and read".

5.6 Visions of Social Justice Education for the Future

As a culminating discussion, participants were asked to reflect on their personal and professional visions regarding social justice education. In these reflections, new teachers drew on their own personal, educational and professional experiences to offer suggestions about how they wanted to see social justice education unfold and evolve.

5.6.1 *Empowering Children Through Awareness*

For some participants (Kiran, Jian, Sun and Anika), developing student awareness of social issues and empowering them to think critically about their actions were key elements shaping their visions of social justice education. Jian spoke about students being "empowered...high on awareness...critical and analytical and confident" and teachers making spaces for students to "explore world issues [and] relevant curriculum" (April 24, 2008). Kiran felt that a teacher's role was to "get to the core of things...[and] bring

attention and awareness to poverty, racial and cultural issues” and encourage students to “be the change [they] wish to see in the world” (March 7, 2008). Anika felt that “opening doors for alternate [perspectives] by first examining our own “bias and talking about it” was a “crucial part of any social change” (March 19, 2008).

These references to awareness, empowerment and critical thinking reflected Freire’s (1970) notions of teachers moving students from a more prescriptive style of knowledge acquisition through a “pedagogy of answers” and “adaptation” by challenging them to become more critical-minded and aware through a “pedagogy of creativity” (p. 227). Their ideas also paralleled those of researchers (Adams, 2000; Freire, 1970; Kumashiro et al., 2004; Sleeter & Grant, 2007) who argued that in order for change to occur, we must first reflect on our own life experiences and social locations, and then take an active stance to challenge constructs that are oppressive. As well, this notion of moving children to become more conscious is in alignment with Shakman et al.’s (2007) argument that teachers have the potential to be both educators and activists.

Building on notions of moving learning out into the world, Mared, Emily, Ryan, Jill and Raine felt it was necessary to push both teachers, and children to better understand different perspectives through more active local and global community involvement and connections.

Bring the kids out into the world. You go to Salt Spring Island and you learn about the underground railroad and the slave trade and you go to these different places and it is very hands-on. But having more choice to your programs, to have some more depth to the education that is out there. (Raine, Aug. 10, 2007)

I think it would be neat even for maybe in the older grades like giving kids an opportunity to go overseas—That every kid would have that opportunity to step outside of their normal zone. (Emily, May 29, 2007)

Applebaum (2002) and Rice (2002) argued that beliefs and perceptions are not immutable and that new possibilities for moral agency are possible through shifting our social locations. As well, Allard and Santoro (2004; 2006) and Harro (2000), suggested that how we see and locate ourselves depends largely on the discourses and experiences we are being offered. Therefore, these participants' visions of social justice suggested that by taking students out into the world, teachers would potentially be providing opportunities for their students to move beyond what was considered "normative" to engage with different perspectives. However, on a cautionary note, in initiating these types of experiences for their students, teachers need to acknowledge their own subtle, "well-intentioned roles" (Applebaum, 2000, p. 417) that could perpetuate, rather than eliminate dominant oppressive acts.

Liz noted that she felt that for social justice to truly become a way of living, it needed to "just be" and that her role was "to instill a seed to make a difference [by] touching at least one life" (May 8, 2008). Ana echoed this by wanting to see children actually "incorporating [social justice] so that "the kids actually start living it, not just talking about it" (Feb. 14, 2008). Whereas Beth felt that the "day-to-day" (Nov. 1, 2007) classroom experiences were most important in making a difference. Much like ideas presented by D'Souza et al. (2007) and Shakman et al. (2007), these participants' visions suggested an interest in creating positive school experiences that could move toward improving the life chances of all children. Moreover, the notion of moving kids from simply talking about social justice to actually living in socially conscious ways, supported Freire's (1970) arguments for propelling ideas and visions into action through engaged involvement.

5.6.2 Ministry and School-Wide Commitment to Social Justice

Many participants noted that they would like to see the integration of social justice become a school or district-wide goal. As Jada (June 10, 2008) commented, “the whole staff needs to be on board, a commitment by everyone”. In their collective vision, new teachers and experienced teachers would work collaboratively to create programs and curriculum that could improve the life chances of all children (D’Souza et al, 2007; Shakman et al., 2007). Liz suggested that this could work if staffs worked together at “trying to integrate social justice into the school as a whole” (May 8, 2008). This idea of working collaboratively is supported by researchers (Kardos & Johnson, 2007; Wang, 2008; Wenger, 1998) who argue that by working collaboratively, teachers could open spaces for transformative practices to emerge.

While Hannah thought that “avoid[ing] prescribed, mandated ways of teaching” (May 29, 2008) opened more spaces for transformative practice, Richard grappled with the pros and cons of a mandated social justice curriculum.

A mandatory curriculum lower than Grade 12 I’d like to see. I want to say that I’d like the Ministry to play a greater role in it but at the same time I know that’s not always the best option. I’d like to see them do more but sometimes I don’t want to see them do more. Generalization and homogenization of it [would be a concern if it were a set curriculum]. And in that losing some of its effectiveness and its bite. I would hazard a guess there are some people teaching that we wouldn’t necessarily want to be teaching social justice to be honest. Honestly I think the primary thing I have suggested is just to bring it to the forefront. If you make it something mandatory that has to be taught, then it can’t be ignored. Well at some point unless you are making it mandatory you might get some resistance or downright refusal from some teachers to that. In some cases you see where [the ministry] does an admirable job. I think in the social studies I’m using right now—like it does an admirable job of integrating a sense of social justice into it. But there is always room for more. (Richard, Nov. 8, 2007)

Richard’s quandary about the effectiveness of mandating curriculum was an example of how critical examination of government initiatives about social responsibility and social

justice need to enter into general educational discourses. This kind of discourse might then encourage new, as well as veteran, teachers to critically examine the authoritative discourses (e.g., government-developed and recommended/mandated curriculum) that are funneled into educational communities (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995). Furthermore, as argued by Canadian researchers Schick and St. Denis (2005), such critical examination might assist teachers in deconstructing the popular mythology “of an egalitarian, not racist [Canadian] national self-image” (p. 308).

5.6.3 Teacher Education Program Commitment to Social Justice

Finally, Anika and Jian, drawing on their own teacher education program experiences, felt that even if preservice teachers were on a social justice trajectory, teacher education programs needed to address social justice more explicitly through coursework and fieldwork.

There have to be those experiences in their training to get their certification for these new teachers and for these new teachers to practice these ideas as I am trying to now. (Jian, April 24, 2008)

I think that it is just as or more important than the other things that we have to take. (Anika, March 19, 2008)

The discourses of these two teachers highlighted the importance of creating educational courses or programs that provided opportunities for preservice teachers to examine their beliefs, privileged social positions and to engage in discourses of difference as suggested by many researchers (Allard & Santoro, 2004; Applebaum, 2001; Cochran-Smith, 2004; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Sleeter & Grant, 2007). Although this is something to strive for, researchers (Brown, 2004; Causey et al, 2000; Kagan, 1992; Levine-Rasky, 2001),

along with many of the participants, remind us that regardless of teacher education program intervention, changing understandings, beliefs and attitudes is often challenging.

5.7 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I presented a second interpretive montage that explored new teachers' discourses as they grappled with social justice in the context of teaching. Using ideas presented by researchers (Casey, 1993; Cochran-Smith, 2005; hooks, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Levine-Rasky, 2001; Thiessen et al., 1996), I examined participants' reflections on what factors they believed determined a teacher's ability to become a social justice educator/agent of social change. I then analyzed participants' discourses on incorporating social justice into their teaching practice using research on social justice (Adams, 2000; Cochran-Smith, 2004; D'Souza et al., 2007; Kumashiro, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994) and social responsibility standards outlined by the Government of British Columbia (2001). In this analysis, I presented participant discourses on whether they felt encouraged or discouraged to incorporate social justice into their practice. Drawing on constructs presented by researchers (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995; Kardos & Johnson, 2007; Wang et al., 2008; Wenger, 1998), I then examined participants' thoughts about new teacher support, induction and mentorship. Finally, I explored participants' visions of social justice for future schools and communities. In addition, maintaining the notion that our beliefs inform our actions and pedagogy (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005; Delpit, 1988; Palmer, 1998), throughout this chapter I demonstrated how participants' previous discourses on family, education, sociocultural affiliations, work/volunteer experiences, and definitions of social justice connected to their discourses on grappling with social justice in the context of teaching.

CHAPTER 6

ASSEMBLING THE PIECES – AUTHOR REFLECTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

To better understand how new teachers construct their understandings of social justice, in this study I asked 27 beginning teachers to share narratives beginning with their early life experiences and moving through to the present. Then to gain better insight on how, or if, these experiences informed/influenced their practice, I asked them to share how they grappled with social justice in the context of teaching. Informed by Clandinin’s and Connelly’s (1995) notion that teachers need safe places to share their stories, participants’ discourses confirm that *new* teachers have much to share about their personal and professional experiences.

In this final chapter, I “assemble the pieces” by weaving connections between participant discourses analyzed in Chapters Four and Five and discussing themes that emerged. In the first section I will explore themes on new teachers’ dispositions, experiences, beliefs and perspectives that have evolved from their discourses on social justice. In doing this, I will highlight the role of teacher education and dispositions indicative of social justice educators. In a subsequent section, I will explore themes on grappling with social justice in the context of teaching and examine discourses on support and mentorship, and new teacher job related experiences/realities. Following this, I will propose identifying characteristics, dispositions and conditions that can be related to the extent to which new teachers are able to incorporate social justice into their practice and become social justice educators/agents of social change. Finally, to address issues and

concerns that emerged in my study, I offer my personal considerations and recommendations.

6.1 Dispositions, Experiences, Beliefs and Perspectives

Sociocultural theorists Bakhtin (1981) and Holland et al. (1998) argue that our identities and understandings are formed through discourses and interactions, and that with each new interaction new voices are introduced and opportunities for new understandings and perspectives are made possible. Other educational researchers contend that how we construct meaning in our lives is based on personal histories, social identifications and understandings (Adams et al., 2000, Allard & Santoro, 2006; Causey et al., 2000; Cochran-Smith, 2004; Cross, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Schick & St. Denis, 2005). Applying these arguments to the metaphor of montage, one might extrapolate that with each new interaction, experience, or discourse, lives are subject to editing. In the analysis of participants' narratives and discourses in Chapters Four and Five, it became apparent that their current understandings of social justice were connected to the interactions, experiences and discourses that evolved over the course of their lives. These understandings were edited as each new interaction, experience and discourse was accommodated, assimilated, or rejected.

More specifically, participants' initial understandings of social justice originated from family discourses and as they moved from the figured world (Holland et al., 1998) of family to the figured world of school, where educational discourses began to further shape their understandings of social justice. Then, as participants developed sociocultural affiliations with those who were different from or similar to them, previous understandings were confirmed or challenged. In my analysis, participants referred to

sociocultural affiliations with those who were culturally/ethnically/racially similar, and sociocultural affiliations with those who were culturally/ethnically/racially different. Examining participants' narratives on sociocultural affiliations with those who were similar, two relevant discourses emerged. In one discourse, participants spoke about identifying and socializing with those from the same cultural/social backgrounds. While in another discourse one particular participant suggested that, rather than identifying solely with those from the same cultural background, she negotiated multiple identities by improvising on the cultural resources and positions offered.

In analyzing the discourse on sociocultural affiliations with those who were culturally/ethnically/racially different, participants' narratives indicated that through a variety of cultural experiences they found their beliefs and understandings of social justice challenged in new ways. Overall, as participants moved out into the world as adults, to travel, work, volunteer, or attend university, they acquired new experiences and discourses that further led them to develop understandings of social justice which were complimentary, or in some instances, contradictory to previously held beliefs.

6.1.1 Education with Intent: The Role of Teacher Education

Educational researchers claim that if new teachers are expected to teach from a social justice perspective, it is imperative that they first deconstruct their own understandings, beliefs and worldviews (Dei, 1996; Delpit, 1995, 1998; Gay, 2002; Greene, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994). Furthermore, philosophical researchers Levinson (1999) and Rice (2001), contend that moral agency requires one to become conscious of how situated perceptions are filtered through cultural, classed, raced, gendered and ethnic lenses. And then, according to Applebaum (2001), to enact moral agency one must

decentre privileged positions to make space for new understandings and perceptions to emerge. These researchers indicate that, unfortunately, many preservice teachers enter education programs without ever having been asked to examine their own understandings, values and beliefs, and in turn how those beliefs will inform their teaching practice. In light of this, teacher education researchers argue that reflection be a central element of all teacher education programs (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Cross, 2005; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 2004; Schick & St. Denis, 2005; Sleeter, 1993; Toh et al., 2000).

Paralleling ideas presented by these educational researchers and philosophers, my research findings suggested that teacher education can be an important site for developing an awareness of beliefs and understandings of social justice and teaching practice. As my research findings demonstrate, participants' beliefs, understandings and worldviews were shaped by a variety of discourses and experiences and that those discourses were connected to their definitions of social justice, which in turn influenced their perceptions of how social justice should play out in the context of teaching. Although many of the participants spoke about the variety of discourses and life experiences that were influential in shaping their understandings of social justice, they suggested that it wasn't until they were enrolled in a teacher education program that these understandings were made explicit. In their narratives, many of the participants noted that although their teacher education program did not specifically challenge them to *change* their beliefs, by participating in a program focused on social justice, they were challenged to *deconstruct* their beliefs and explore how their beliefs informed/influenced their teaching practice. Consequently, even though many of the participants felt they were already on a social

justice trajectory and that their teacher education program simply gave them “an extra little push” (Emily, May 29, 2007) by bringing it “to consciousness” (Beth, Nov. 1, 2007), they all articulated that their teacher education program experiences were instrumental in further shaping their current understandings of social justice, and/or further shaping their teaching practice. As a result, they all left their teacher education experience feeling that it had been beneficial. In a similar vein to researchers’ (Banks, 2001; Brown, 2004; Causey et al., 2000; Kagan, 1992) argument that preservice teachers require opportunities to examine their beliefs and pedagogy, participants agreed that teacher education programs could be important sites for exploring beliefs and understandings of social justice and social justice education.

6.1.2 Passionate Inclinations: Dispositions of Social Justice Educators

In Chapter Two, as I examined the literature on teachers as agents of social change, I asked, “in today’s frenetic world of education where new teachers struggle with myriad authoritative discourses about standards, accountability and curriculum, one might wonder how such conscious and passionate teachers might emerge?” Although the answer to this question was not obvious at the outset, analysis of the participants’ narratives indicated that certain dispositions could characterize those new teachers who saw themselves as social justice educators, and in most cases they were able to successfully incorporate social justice into their teaching practice. Much of what I discovered through examining participant discourses coincided with what educational researchers had identified as dispositions common to teachers acting as agents of social change/social reconstructionist educators (Casey, 1993; hooks, 2003; Cochran-Smith,

2004; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Levine-Rasky, 2001; Shakman et al., 2007; Thiessen et al., 1994).

In their collective discourses, participants identified the following dispositions as indicative of teachers acting as agents of social change/social justice educators: confidence, courage, risk-taking, reflective capacity, open-mindedness, a willingness to explore issues that might make them uncomfortable and a desire to increase awareness of social justice issues. Along with this, many participants suggested that to be social justice educators/agents of social change, teachers needed to view incorporating social justice into their practice as a priority. It could be argued that rather than referencing personal experiences with such dispositions, participants were speaking from an idealistic perception of what dispositions they imagine social justice educators embodying.

Interestingly, some of the same dispositions participants identified as indicative to social justice educators were the same dispositions they cited as wanting to inspire in the children they taught. In their visions of social justice education for the future, they indicated that they hoped that through education, children would become empowered, confident, critical thinkers who were aware of difference and issues of social justice; and be able to view and understand others, and the world, from a variety of different perspectives. In essence, as stated by Kiran (March 7, 2008), they hoped to inspire their students to “become the change they wish to see in the world”.

For those participants in my study who were born into social categories of difference (based on culture, ethnicity, race, or socio-economic status), personally identifying personally with issues of social justice appeared to have provided them with a natural understanding of oppression and/or discrimination—an understanding that shaped

how they *envisioned* their teaching practice. However, as my research demonstrated, it would be a mistake to assume that all new teachers who identified with discourses of difference automatically became agents of social change/social justice educators. In fact, even when identifying with discourses of difference, new teachers in my study that did not possess strong dispositions of confidence, courage, risk-taking, or were anxious about exploring controversial topics were uncertain about incorporating social justice into their practice. Furthermore, highlighting the complexities involved with becoming agents of social change/social justice educators, participants cited that they often chose to keep a low profile in schools to secure a sense of inclusion and to appease parents and staff.

Adding another layer of complexity, in Chapter One I outlined concerns that the teaching profession in Canada, US, UK and Australia continued attract predominantly Caucasian, middle-class females who had originated from homogeneous community and school experiences (Allard & Santoro, 2004, 2006; Causey et al., 2000; Coville-Hall, MacDonald & Smolen, 1995). Twenty-two of the twenty-seven new teachers participating in my research were Caucasian, and of those twenty-two, nineteen were female, thus confirming researchers' concerns. Moreover, researchers claim that teachers who had not been provided with, or had not actively sought out, experiences throughout the course of their lives that assisted them in more fully understanding issues of social justice would not necessarily have the skills and dispositions requisite for teaching an increasingly heterogeneous population of students (Cross, 2005; Haberman, 2005; Johnson, 2002; Mills, 2007; Milner & Smithey, 2003; Schick & St. Denis, 2005 & 2006; Villegas & Lucas, 2002; Zeichner, 2003 & 2006a/b).

Through examining the participants' discourses on social justice in Chapter Four, it was apparent that those who had interactions and experiences throughout the course of their lives with those who were different from them had a broader understanding of issues of social justice. Although the majority of the participants were Caucasian females, many discussed how they had engaged in travel, work and volunteer experiences that had given them opportunities to explore new perspectives and further shape their understandings of social justice and social justice education. However, as demonstrated in Chapter Five, such experiences and broadened understandings do not necessarily translate into social justice teaching practices.

In concluding this section, I propose that new teachers demonstrating specific dispositions and a passion for teaching social justice are more apt to explore social justice in their teaching practice. As well, those who personally identify with experiences of difference or discrimination, or have had significant life, educational, work/volunteer experiences that challenged beliefs or shifted perspectives, appear to have clearer understandings of social justice and social justice education. However, in proposing this, I also acknowledge that increased awareness, clearer understanding, and passion may not be enough to counter the multitude of *job-related* conditions and challenges facing new teachers in their first years.

6.2 Grappling with Social Justice in the Context of Teaching

Ladson-Billings (2001) reminds us that even upon successful completion of teacher education programs, graduates will be beginning teachers in need of support and guidance. For this reason we cannot ignore the potential struggle new teachers confront as they move from the figured world of university to the figured world of teacher and are

inducted into the teaching profession (Bakhtin, 1981; Holland et al., 1998). Thus, in analyzing their discourses on grappling with social justice in the context of teaching, participants in my study shared stories of encouragement and discouragement; success and challenge; confidence and uncertainty.

6.2.1 New Teacher Support, Mentorship and Induction

Researchers argue that successful mentorship is based on building supportive communities where new and experienced teachers collaborate to develop engaging and innovative practices (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995; Kardos & Johnson, 2007; Wang et al., 2008; Wenger, 1998). However, Wang et al., note that new teachers often left university programs only to find that the ideas and pedagogy introduced were not supported in existing school cultures. This was evident in my research findings as many of the participants found that the ideas and social justice pedagogy introduced in their teacher education program were not necessarily supported in the school cultures in which they were working. As a result, many participants indicated that unless, once out teaching, they were “still engaged” (Adelle, April 3, 2008) in discussions and professional development around social justice, it would be difficult to maintain the social justice pedagogy introduced in their teacher preparation program. Consequently, much in the same way that Clandinin & Connelly, and Wang et al. observed elsewhere, in an attempt to fit in, the participants in my study indicated that they often abandoned their preservice beliefs and practices around social justice and adopted the ideas and practices prevalent in the schools in which they were working. However, as indicated by those participants who felt strongly about social justice education, it is ultimately up to the individual teacher to take responsibility for his/her own professional growth and development. For

this reason it could be construed that those teachers who abandon perspectives they adopted during their preservice experience blame it on lack of quality mentorship and professional development opportunities but might in fact simply be using this as an excuse for not infusing social justice into their practice. In other words inconsistencies could indicate that some participants were enacting a “cover story” that suggests because they are facing too many challenges it is too complicated to attempt to address social justice in their practice.

Kardos and Johnson (2007) and Wang et al. (2008) claim that the effectiveness of structured mentoring programs was entirely dependent on how such programs were designed and implemented. The most effective programs, argue Kardos and Johnson, are those where school communities shared a sense of collective commitment and responsibility for the school, students and staff. Much like Wenger’s (1998) notion of successful communities of practice, in these integrated professional cultures new teachers are viewed as integral, valued, contributing members (Kardos & Johnson, 2007). In my research participants stated that, even if available to them, they generally did not belong to any sort of structured mentoring program. However, even if they did not participate in a structured mentorship program, those who worked in school communities where they felt valued and encouraged to take risks in incorporating social justice into their practice, articulated that they were well supported.

Cochran-Smith (2004) suggests that teachers acting as agents of social change/social justice educators create bonds with like-minded individuals to support each other in working against the grain. By connecting with other teachers, participants in my research noted that, rather than participating in structured mentoring programs, they most

often sought out their own like-minded mentors. However, Wang et al. (2008) caution that not all like-minded mentor relationships support reform-minded practice. For example, for new teachers such as Naila, who through previous discourses demonstrated that she had begun her career teaching from a social justice perspective, selecting her own mentors outside of structured programs allowed her to network with teachers who were like-minded and willing to engage in discourses about social justice. Whereas placing her in a mentorship program and assigning her a pre-determined mentor that may not share her passion for social justice education might have discouraged her growth and development as a teacher disposed toward becoming an agent of social change/social justice educator. Conversely, it could be argued that for those new teachers feeling less confident or courageous, surrounding them with reform-minded teacher mentors, as opposed to partnering them with a mentor with similar dispositions, in a program such as proposed by Kardos and Johnson (2007), might encourage them to take risks in incorporating social justice into their practice. Consequently, connecting with like-minded teacher mentors could either discourage or encourage reform-minded, transformative practice (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995; Cochran-Smith, 2004).

In conclusion, the participants in my research recommend that mentorship programs need to explore and acknowledge multiple ways of connecting new teachers with meaningful, relevant, supportive mentorship experiences where they can engage in dialogue about social justice education and teaching practice.

6.2.2 New Teacher Experiences and Job-Related Realities

According to researchers, how well new teachers adapt to the ever-evolving changes, and the dissonance this can invoke, often determines whether they remain in the

profession (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995; Causey et al., 2000; Garmon, 2004; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Haberman, 2005; Mills, 2007; Zeichner, 2003). Moreover, the ability to adapt to the ever-present complexities, changes and expectations indicative of the teaching profession is largely dependent on how adeptly new teachers improvise and play out their various roles and navigate outside pressures from governments, schools, parents and society (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995; Holland, 1998). Researchers argue that many new teachers feel obligated to follow the authoritative ideas funneled into the profession and compliance is equated with ensuring greater acceptance and a sense of belonging within their respective school communities (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995; Wenger, 1998).

Many of the participants spoke to the multitude of challenges that discouraged them from exploring social justice in their practice (e.g., job/curriculum constraints, fears of offending parents/staff members, class demographics/dynamics). Almost all of the new teachers participating in my research articulated that they had been, or were currently employed in teaching positions that were pieced-together and/or erratic. Even for those who worked full-time in one particular school, their teaching positions were often temporary and subject to change from year to year. As a result, many participants noted that the constant change and unpredictability of their teaching assignments made it more challenging for them to explore social justice in their teaching practice. In addition to this, because “future jobs are riding on the impressions you make” (Jill, Feb. 2, 2008), new teachers often “play[ed] it safe” (Jill) with regards to teaching social justice. As well, classroom demographics made teaching from a social justice perspective challenging for other participants. Consequently, for these participants, adapting to the complexities and changes indicative of the teaching profession, meant adopting a more mainstream

pedagogy and playing the role of a more compliant teacher rather than one who was resistant to dominant group attitudes. Although some of the participants indicated that they wanted to teach from more of a social justice perspective, they did not feel they taught in educational settings conducive to such risk-taking, reform-minded practices.

Further to teaching assignment complexities, government-mandated curriculum challenges and constraints also seemed to be apparent in determining how new teachers incorporated social justice into their practice. Many participants articulated that they felt pressured to move through content-driven curriculum that afforded them few opportunities for teaching from new perspectives. They argued that simply becoming familiar with, and implementing the prescribed curriculum as it was laid out was enough of a challenge. As previously stated, the analysis of challenges preventing these new teachers from exploring social justice in their teaching practice could alternatively be interpreted as a “cover story”.

Although all the participants articulated that they were able to incorporate social justice or social responsibility into their practice, the ways in which they taught or the *types* of experiences they created for their students were largely dependent on their individual beliefs, social locations, personal dispositions and perceptions/interpretations of social justice. Those who defined social justice as more about community building through care and respect taught from a social responsibility perspective as identified by the BC Performance Standards (2001).⁵ While I would argue that all of the participants taught from a perspective of care and respect, those who felt strongly that social justice

⁵ As outlined in previous chapters, while I do not support the use of the BC performance standards, this discourse is included in my study as these understandings of social responsibility are widely accepted in the BC schools where the majority of the participants are employed.

was about oppression and rights, moved beyond social responsibility to engage students in activities and discussions about topics such as racism, privilege, poverty, children's rights, etc. In my opinion, these participants taught from more of a social justice perspective as defined by researchers (Adams, 2000; Cochran-Smith, 2004; D'Souza et al., 2007; Ladson-Billings, 1994).

Those participants teaching from a social responsibility perspective found that their ideas were more in-line with widely held perceptions dominating BC school cultures. However, those participants teaching from a social justice perspective found that their ideas and understandings were not as widely accepted by schools. This created yet another dilemma for these new teachers wanting to fit in to existing school cultures. Therefore, on the one hand, for those teaching in encouraging and supportive school communities, introducing ideas of social justice was not as challenging as for those who teach in educational settings where they feel more uncertain and their practice more scrutinized. On the other hand, for many other participants it was much less stressful to simply comply and teach from the widely accepted social responsibility perspective. It could be argued that by exhibiting a certain level of compliance and adaptability these new teachers had been sufficiently and successfully inducted into the teaching profession. However, researchers caution that we remain conscious and wary of induction as a process of adaptation (Freire, 1970, 1998; Clandinin & Connelly, 1995).

In concluding this section, my research findings indicate that teaching conditions do play a role in determining new teachers' abilities or inabilities to incorporate social justice into their practice. Moreover, teaching assignment realities and curriculum challenges create complex circumstances for new teachers that may not be easily

resolved. However, as indicated above, an alternate interpretation might suggest that some participants enacted a “cover story” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995) of challenge and struggle to mask their actual reasons for not exploring ways to infuse social justice into their practice. Therefore, one wonders whether new teachers are able to extend their understandings and practice of social justice from their preservice experience into their teaching practice according not only to the conditions of their teaching assignments, but also to their ability to identify with specific dispositions and life experiences.

6.3 New Teacher Dispositions and Teaching Conditions

Although all the participants indicated that they were able to incorporate some type of social responsibility or social justice experience into their teaching practice, further analysis revealed that some were more successful than others. To what extent they were able to incorporate social justice into their teaching practice was connected to their abilities to identify with specific *dispositions*, experiences and perspectives. Furthermore, it is contingent on *conditions* of support and encouragement, and related to teaching assignment and curriculum challenges. As a result, I propose seven identifying characteristics suggesting dispositions and conditions that can be related to social justice education, which emerge from my analysis of participants’ discourses on social justice understandings and practice.

I have organized these characteristics along two themes. Characteristics one through four refer to individual dispositions, personal life experiences, and personal perspectives/beliefs that tell us how understandings of social justice and social justice education were constructed. These four characteristics also highlight dispositions indicative of teachers who act as agents of social change/social justice educators.

Characteristics five through seven refer to new teacher experiences and realities as they grapple with social justice in the context of teaching.

1. Expressing confidence, courage, risk-taking, reflective capacity, open-mindedness, a willingness to explore tensions and a desire to increase awareness of social justice issues.
2. Possessing a passion for teaching about/for social justice, and views incorporating social justice in their practice as a priority.
3. Identifying with social justice through personal experiences with difference and/or injustice/discrimination.
4. Demonstrating significant life, educational or volunteer/work experiences that have offered opportunities for deconstructing beliefs and, when necessary, challenging or shifting perspectives regarding issues of social justice.
5. Teaching in a supportive and encouraging school community where they feel valued and accepted.
6. Connecting with reform-minded teaching mentors with whom they can engage in dialogue about social justice education and teaching practice.
7. Teaching in assignments more conducive to incorporating social justice (e.g., teaching subjects in which social justice can be easily infused; consistent and continual contact with the same students; teaching in their own classrooms where they feel more autonomous).

Those new teachers who were able to identify with all of these characteristics seemed to be well positioned for successfully incorporating social justice into their practice. For example, Naila and Ryan were two such participants who identified with all

of the characteristics and demonstrated that they were successfully incorporating social justice in their teaching practice. Those who were able to identify with many, but not all, of the seven characteristics seemed to still experience success, but found some situations/conditions more challenging when trying to incorporate social justice into their practice. For example, while Lian and Kiran were participants who could identify with most of the characteristics (including identifying personal experiences with difference and/or discrimination), they both found that by working as Teachers-On-Call their opportunities to teach social justice education were constrained. Those identifying with only one or two of the characteristics appeared to be very discouraged and found it challenging, and at times impossible, to incorporate social justice into their practice. For example, Sun, who connected with some of the dispositions (open-mindedness and reflective capacity) and identified personally with discourses of difference, struggled to incorporate social justice in her practice because of a multitude of other challenges facing her (job/curriculum constraints, feeling unsupported and isolated in school communities, lack of mentorship opportunities).

Initially it seemed that the first key factor outlining individual dispositions would be the most significant in determining how successfully a new teacher was able to incorporate social justice into her practice. However, as I reflected on the participants' accounts of the realities facing new teachers I realized that even the most courageous and confident individual could be deterred from incorporating social justice into her practice.

While these characteristics relate to new teacher discourses and recommendations emerging from research, they can also be applied to preservice teacher experiences. I suggest that considering these seven characteristics can be beneficial to those working on

admissions criteria/processes for entry into teacher education programs and informing those who work on programming for university education coursework and field experiences. These seven characteristics can also be used to inform school districts' decisions regarding new teacher mentorship and support.

6.4 Considerations and Recommendations

In light of the seven characteristics I previously proposed, in this next section I discuss considerations around teacher education instruction/programming and preservice teacher recruitment/admissions processes; bridging gaps between teacher education programs and new teacher experiences; and new teacher support and mentorship. Based on the discourses of new teachers who participated in my study, I offer recommendations useful to teacher education/school district/ministry policy-makers, program designers, mentorship program consultants, and professional development coordinators.

6.4.1 *Teacher Education Considerations*

Researchers suggest that we need to broaden our scope of selection to consider preservice teachers' preconceived, well-established beliefs that have been shaped by life experiences and experiences with schooling (Brown, 2004; Causey et al., 2000; Kagan, 1992). Moreover, in examining their beliefs and attitudes preservice teachers need to reflect on whether these notions locate them in a socially constructed culture of domination (Allard & Santoro; Applebaum, 2001; Causey et al., 2000, 2004; Harro, 2000). This is not to suggest that we should assume those without diverse life experiences will automatically adopt a pedagogy that will be exclusionary, prejudicial and oppressive. However, Garmon (2004) argues that those preservice teachers entering into teacher

education programs with strong biases, negative stereotypes and attitudes about diverse groups are less likely to develop professional beliefs consistent with multicultural sensitivity.

Ideally it would be preferable to recruit prospective teacher candidates already possessing dispositions, attitudes and perspectives necessary for shifting education to be more equitable, inclusive and socially just for all children as suggested in the first four characteristics I proposed. However, I argue that this might require that school districts and university programs work together to identify and encourage those secondary school and university undergraduate students exhibiting such dispositions to consider teaching as a career. In addition to this, I would also recommend that university teacher education program coordinators and faculty collaborate to determine a common understanding of social justice and then closely examine admissions processes to determine whether or not they are able to identify preservice candidates possessing dispositions indicative of social justice educators as identified by this or other research. Then, in identifying these candidates, examine whether current admissions procedures are structured in such a way that prospective social justice educators are being admitted into teacher preparation programs. However, in suggesting these recommendations I also acknowledge that pressures to meet practical challenges, such as addressing teacher shortages facing specialized programs, can create additional constraints on university education program policies and admissions procedures.

As I outline in my research, prospective teachers come to education programs with varied family, sociocultural, educational, and personal experiences that determine their beliefs, worldviews and understandings. Therefore, even if processes were

restructured to attract and admit prospective candidates possessing dispositions indicative to social justice educators into teacher education programs, I suggest that the content and instruction of such programs, along with preservice teacher field placements, also need to be addressed. Although I do not believe it is the role of teacher education to *change* a person's beliefs, I argue it is the role of teacher education to offer opportunities for *deconstructing, situating and confronting their* beliefs and for exploring a variety of perspectives.⁶ Providing these opportunities, of course, is also dependent on the commitment, interests, comfort level, personal definitions of social justice and dispositions of teacher educators planning for, and implementing teacher education programs. It is also dependent on the interests, personal definitions of social justice and comfort level of the sponsor teachers mentoring preservice teachers during their practicum experiences. Therefore, if it is the intention of teacher education to prepare new teachers for teaching in equitable, inclusive and socially just ways, then it seems imperative that universities not only examine admissions processes for admitting prospective preservice teachers, but that they also examine processes and criteria for hiring prospective teacher educators and selecting sponsor teachers/field placements.

In my study most participants indicated that placement in a teacher education program focused on social justice did not challenge them to change their beliefs. However, they all indicated that they felt the experiences and opportunities offered to them allowed them to view social justice education in new ways. As a result, many recommended that all preservice teachers engage in such discourses and experiences

⁶ It should be noted that in stating this I acknowledge the limits of tolerating certain perspectives and beliefs in a constitutional context of human rights – limits defined by policies outlined in documents such as the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, The Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

while enrolled in teacher education programs. Therefore, combining their recommendations with those indicated by several researchers, it seems imperative that teacher education program coordinators and teacher educators work collaboratively to explore ways in which social justice could be infused into the educational experiences of all preservice teachers (Dei, 1996; Delpit, 1995, 1998; Cochran-Smith, 2005; Gay, 2002; Greene, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994). These recommendations correspond directly to the fourth disposition I identified that discusses educational experiences offering opportunities for deconstructing beliefs.

6.4.2 *Bridging Gaps*

Although I discuss the importance of addressing social justice in teacher education, I am not convinced that the sole responsibility for addressing social justice education should lie in the hands of universities. I would agree that university programs are an essential component; however it seems that to become truly effective at initiating change, school districts and education ministries need to work in collaboration with universities to address issues of social justice affecting all communities. However, as is evident in my research, it appears that gaps between ideas and ideals held by university teacher education programs and schools/school districts continue to exist; gaps that create pedagogical dilemmas particularly for new teachers just beginning their careers.

As previously mentioned, once they were teaching, participants suggested that in order to remain engaged with social justice, they needed to be connected with teachers who shared a similar passion, or they required professional development opportunities focused on social justice education. At the very least, they requested opportunities to engage in professional dialogue about how they might creatively incorporate social

justice into their teaching practice. Even though *some* participants indicated that they had participated in some professional development experiences focused on social justice, they all suggested that these opportunities were few and far between. As a consequence I suggest that perhaps schools, school districts, and universities work collaboratively to make a more concerted effort to offer such professional development opportunities. Moreover, through examining participants' discourses it became apparent that there are few educational resources that adequately address social justice issues relevant to Canadian culture and written from a Canadian perspective. I suggest that perhaps it is time for educators, educational organizations, authors and publishers to collaborate to create resources that reflect the unique qualities, issues indicative to Canadian culture and society.

What also surfaces as a consideration, is that in British Columbia an apparent gap exists between the widely held views of social justice in academia and the widely held views of social justice, as it is understood in schools. As discussed in Chapter Two, the commonly held view of social justice in BC schools is generally one of social responsibility as informed by the BC performance standards. An approach that parallels Schick and St. Denis's (2005) argument that social justice as it is perceived in Canada perpetuates a mythology about how we, as Canadians, have successfully and adequately addressed issues of racism and discrimination—a mythology that has been, and continues to be, fuelled by believing that in introducing performance standards for social responsibility into the schools, we are in fact adequately addressing social and systemic inequities affecting many children.

Although I applaud the BC Ministry of Education for considering social responsibility worthy of attention in public schools, I suggest that such discourses require critical analysis to determine whether such programs do indeed contribute to alleviating or eliminating social and systemic inequities. Moreover, to bridge the gap between university and school discourses on social justice, I suggest all stakeholders work collaboratively to engage in dialogue to develop clearer understandings and educational opportunities about the purposes and implications of social responsibility and social justice education. This could also open doors for new discourses around social justice, which could in turn provide opportunities for novice and veteran teachers to connect and engage in dialogue about social justice education. Moreover, in engaging in such dialogue, both could share their experiences and discuss innovative ways of working within curriculum and teaching assignment constraints that evidently challenge most of the new teachers participating in my research.

6.4.3 Support and Mentorship

Although some school districts are apparently coordinating mentorship programs, according to my research they are not necessarily effective and useful to new teachers wanting to explore alternate ways of connecting with other teaching professionals. Also, because such programs are not available to all new teachers, it appears that those who are not employed in full-time positions are left feeling very isolated and alone. Overall, participants' discourses raised questions about the effectiveness of new teacher mentorship and support as it is currently enacted in schools and school districts.

Researchers suggest, as an alternative to district initiated structured mentorship programs, a model where school communities work collaboratively to ensure all

members are supported and encouraged to grow professionally (Kardos & Johnson, 2007; Wang et al., 2008; Wenger, 1998). Moreover, as indicated in my research and in the fifth factor I identified, new teachers who felt supported and encouraged were more willing to take risks and try new teaching practices. However, I might argue that although this model could provide a supportive, encouraging environment, it does not necessarily guarantee that new teachers will be surrounded by reform-minded teachers willing to engage in dialogue about social justice education, as suggested in the sixth factor I identified. Consequently, even in this collaborative, encouraging, supportive environment, without such reform-minded mentors, new teachers without strong dispositions and passions toward social justice *might* be inclined to abandon ideas of social justice education. Although I support this collaborative school-based model, I recommend that we go further to ensure new teachers receive a variety of opportunities for professional development and mentorship regarding social justice. In doing this, school districts and mentorship program coordinators need to think creatively to design and offer opportunities, such as action research teams or reform-minded professional/mentorship groups, that better meet the diverse needs of new teachers at different stages of understanding and personal/professional development.

6.5 Concluding Comments

This study set out to explore how new teachers construct their understandings of social justice and how those understandings inform/influence their practice as they begin their careers. Through examining their narratives it appears that new teachers construct their understandings through interactions and discourses from family, education, sociocultural affiliations, work/volunteer and travel experiences. In addition to this,

university coursework and teacher preparation programs seem to be instrumental in further shaping understandings of social justice by providing opportunities for deconstructing beliefs, understandings and worldviews. These understandings are directly related to new teachers' definitions of social justice and/or social responsibility. As a result, these definitions and understandings of social justice do appear to influence the types of experiences these new teachers create for their students. Although new teachers' understandings of social justice do inform/influence the types of experiences they create, the conditions and realities of working as new teachers seem to be significant in determining how successfully they are able to incorporate social justice into their practice.

In this study I propose seven dispositional and conditional characteristics that identify the extent to which teachers are able to incorporate social justice into their practice and/or identify potential social justice educators. In presenting this proposal and offering recommendations for addressing the many issues that arose, I also acknowledge the challenges involved with instigating change. However, I suggest that in conducting studies, our aim as researchers is to offer places for sharing stories and new perspectives that push us to explore new ways of being in, and understanding the world—in the case of this research, discourses and perspectives that push us to explore new ways of being social justice educators in a diverse and ever-changing world. So, however daunting, we as researchers and educators should feel compelled to challenge constructs that are outdated or ill informed. Instead we need to work together to create educational opportunities that inspire not only children, but also teachers and teacher educators to embrace change as an integral part of re-visioning a socially just world.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: TEACHER EDUCATION MODULE FOCUSED ON SOCIAL JUSTICE

Although each year the program has evolved, the following introductory letter to students outlines the basic focus of this module.

In this module, pre-service teachers are involved in a variety of activities inviting them to explore the complexities of teaching in diverse classrooms. Working with a specific faculty member, we hope to present a program that will introduce pre-service teachers to issues of social justice and help them explore strategies for implementing a social justice curriculum.

Underpinning the module philosophy is the notion of community-building focusing on acknowledging “difference” and celebrating unique identities. Module instructors hope to model community building by infusing this philosophy/theory throughout the term (through various activities, workshops and seminars).

Throughout the 401-402 term the Faculty Associates and the Faculty Member will introduce various social justice themes. Discussions, activities and readings will integrate various topics, social justice terms and issues, “rights and freedoms,” voice, public versus private, recognition and identity, multiculturalism, privilege and culturally relevant education. Pre-service teachers are required to address various topics through weekly reflections submitted to their Faculty Associates. Through such reflections it is hoped that students will explore their own personal worldviews, biases and understandings of social justice. They will also be encouraged to challenge ideas, grapple with the complexities of implementing social justice curriculum in culturally relevant ways and develop questions for further exploration.

Woven into the exploration of social justice will be topics about teaching practice (for example: developing effective, engaging and inclusive teaching practices, curriculum design, classroom management, learning styles, assessment and evaluation, belief/vision statements, and integrating aboriginal perspectives).

The focus of this yearlong experience in this Social Justice Module is that of making connections. It is hoped that pre-service teachers will strive to make meaningful connections for themselves and for the children they will teach. The 401-402 experience in this module will help pre-service teachers make meaning through connecting theory, ideology and practice. The Education 404 (teaching methodology) experience will take those initial understandings and make connections to content areas and methodology. The Education 405 experience will offer an opportunity for pre-service teachers to make connections between 401-02 and 404 to further deepen their understandings as they immerse themselves in the practice of teaching in a more specific classroom setting.

It is essential that throughout this experience that pre-service teachers view this year in the Professional Development Program as the *beginning* of a life-long journey into the art of teaching.

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW GUIDE

Background Information:

- What is your current age?
- What month/year did you graduate from PDP?
- How long have you been teaching?
- What is your current teaching assignment? How long have you been in this current position?
- What have been your teaching assignments since leaving PDP?
- Have you always lived in the Lower Mainland? Where else have you lived?
- Can you tell me about any pre-PDP educational experiences that you may have had that have informed your understandings of social justice education (elementary/high school/university courses)?
- Can you talk a bit about your sociocultural affiliations? Friends/travel experiences etc.

Social Justice Education Questions for Exploration:

A) Personal Understandings

- How do you define social justice? Is it the same, or different from social responsibility?
- From where did your understanding of social justice originate?
- What do you think contributed to these understandings? Were there any pivotal moments in your life that inspired your understanding of social justice? Can you elaborate?
- How do understandings of social justice play out in your personal life?

B) Teacher Education/Preparation

- Did your teacher preparation (PDP) program address social justice/social issues in education?
- Did this program in any way influence your current teaching practice? If so, how? If not, can you elaborate?
- Do you feel equipped to teach social justice education? If not, what experiences (professional, or personal) do you feel might better prepare you for teaching social justice education?

C) Teaching Practice

- How do you define social justice education, or teaching for social justice? Is this the same, or different than teaching social responsibility?
- How do you think social justice relates to student learning?
- How do understandings of social justice play out in your teaching practice? What are some of the ways in which your educational practices regarding social justice are connected to your conception of social justice?
- How do you cultivate social justice understandings with your students?
- Are you able to design curriculum experiences that effectively address social justice issues in your classrooms/teaching? Explain. If you are able to design such

experiences, can you show me some examples of student work, or curriculum designs?

- What factors influence your abilities to design, or not to design, such experiences for your students?
- What impediments or challenges do you see, or have you found, in cultivating social justice understandings with your students?

D) Looking Forward: Personal Recommendations

- What factors do you think influence preservice and practicing teachers' abilities to become social justice educators, or agents of social change?
- What support do you think needs to be implemented to assist new teachers in implementing social justice education/curriculum?
- Do you have a vision for social justice in schools and communities? What do you consider key steps in moving toward this vision?