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**Educating All to Struggle for Social Change and Transformation:
Introduction to Case Studies of Critical Praxis**

Special Guest Editors

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Article 26 of the 1948 *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* specifies that “everyone has the right to education” (United Nations, 1948).[1] A commitment to the universal right to education mobilized various actors in 1990 to issue the *World Declaration on Education for All* (EFA), which states that “every person . . . shall be able to benefit from educational opportunities designed to meet their basic learning needs . . . required by human beings to . . . to live and work in dignity . . . [and] to improve the quality of their lives” (Inter-Agency Commission, 1990, Article I). The universal right to education also motivated a similar set of actors in 2000 to develop the *Dakar Framework for Action, Education for All: Meeting our Collective Commitments*, which re-states a global commitment “to the achievement of education for all (EFA) goals and targets for every citizen and for every society” (UNESCO, 2000, p. 8).

However, recent reports monitoring progress toward achieving education for all by 2015 offer sober assessments. UNESCO (2012, p. 4) indicates that “on current trends, the goal of universal primary education (UPE) will be missed by a large margin. . . . Between 2008 and 2010, progress stalled altogether.” UIS (2013, pp. 1, 3) reports that “new data show that the world is unlikely . . . to get every child in school by 2015. . . . [Moreover], there has been little progress in reducing the rate at which children leave school before reaching the last grade of primary education.”

Additionally, although the *Dakar Framework for Action* affirms that “no countries seriously committed to education for all will be thwarted in their achievement of this goal by lack of resources” (UNESCO, 2000, p. 9), there is dispiriting evidence that the international community has not lived up to this responsibility. This is despite the fact that many low- and middle-income countries have increasingly demonstrated their commitment to education for all. According to the *EFA Global Monitoring Report* (UNESCO, 2012):

Among low and middle income countries with comparable data, 63% have increased the share of national income spent on education in the past decade. Coupled with economic growth and greater government capacity to raise revenue, this led to significant increases in total educational expenditure. (p. 42)

Just as a final push is needed to reach the Education for All goals by 2015 . . . there are worrying signs that donor contributions may be slowing down. More money alone will not ensure that the EFA goals are reached, but less money will certainly be harmful.[2] (p. 142)

Global discussions about EFA goals for 2015 and, more so, global deliberations regarding post-2015 education goals have moved beyond access to concerns about improving the quality of

education for those who gain access (see UNESCO, 2004). Both the 1990 and 2000 EFA declarations gave attention to issues of educational quality,[3] though in recent years quality often has been defined narrowly in terms of performance on basic literacy and numeracy tests. As Education International (2012, pp. 4-5) points out:

Much attention in current post-2015 discussions is focused on a narrow view of learning: mainly testing in reading and mathematics. This is a mistake. . . . Evidence shows that other capabilities that foster innovation and build character are also crucial education outcomes, including: creativity, curiosity, civic-mindedness, solidarity, self-discipline, self-confidence, compassion, empathy, courage, self-awareness, resilience, leadership, humility, peace, and more.

That is, unless the post-2015 discussion includes a broader conception of educational quality, schools will be “emaciated spaces” (Jamil, 2013), where children and youth mainly engage in rote learning and memorization of content that is decontextualized from the realities of their lives.

Of course, there have been calls for broader views of education quality. For instance, Leon Tikly and Angeline Barrett (2011) argue that quality education should be grounded in three dimensions from a social justice perspective. First, they contend that quality education must provide learners with access to quality inputs that facilitate the development of capabilities that they and their communities have reason to value. Second, quality education must ensure that the outcomes of education are meaningful and relevant for learners and their communities and consistent with national priorities as well as a changing global context. And third, quality education must prepare learners to meaningfully participate and have a voice, not just in the classroom but also in decisions at the local, national, and global levels.

Defining education quality in this way moves us in the direction of engaging in a form of critical praxis, that is, combining theory and practical action designed to promote social change or transformation. One of the central questions for educators concerned with critical praxis is “Education for what purpose?” This philosophical, political, and practical question gains expression in sub-fields within the field of education, including multicultural education (Banks, 2004; Banks & Banks, 2006; McLaren, 1997; Sleeter, 1996), citizenship education (Biesta, 2011; Kennedy, 1997; Sehr, 1997), education for social justice (Anyon, 2009; Ayers, Quinn & Stovall, 2009), critical education (Apple & Beane, 2007; Apple, Au, & Gandin, 2009), critical pedagogy (Giroux & McLaren, 1989; Kirylo, 2013; Weiler & Mitchell, 1992), and human rights education (Bajaj, 2011). Taken in their richest forms, these sub-fields seek to break the tradition of schooling that reproduces inequities inherent in wider society.

Whether one adopts a human rights, multicultural, feminist, post-colonial, ecological, or socialist stance, it is clear that the world we live in requires change, even transformation (e.g., see Apple, 2013; Guajardo et al., 2008; Kreisberg, 1992).[4] For instance, Mark Ginsburg, Steve Moseley, and Mary Joy Pigozzi (2010, pp. 2-3) argue from a human rights perspective:

Currently, we are not living in a world where all people can realize the full range of human rights—including the right to education . . . To contribute to building a

world in which such rights are realized,[5] educational system policies and structures in all countries need to be transformed, while at the same time the content and processes of education have to be altered so they more effectively contribute to economic, political, and social/cultural transformation of local, national and global communities. (see also Bernstein Tarrow, 1987; Spring, 2000)

Another example is provided by the words of bell hooks (1994, pp. 11-12):

My pedagogical practices have emerged from the mutually illuminating interplay of anticolonial, critical, and feminist pedagogies. . . . [I]t has made it possible for me to imagine and enact pedagogical practices that . . . interrogat[e] biases in curricula that reinscribe systems of domination (such as racism and sexism) while simultaneously providing new ways to teach diverse groups of students. . . . The classroom remains the most radical space of possibility in the academy. . . . I celebrate teaching that enables transgressions—a movement against and beyond boundaries . . . that makes education the practice of freedom.

And Paulo Freire (1970/2000, p. 51) draws on socialist and liberation theology perspectives to articulate an approach labeled pedagogy of the oppressed:

Reality which becomes oppressive results in the contradistinction of men as oppressors and oppressed. The latter's task . . . is to struggle for their liberation together with those who show true solidarity . . . This can be done only by means of the praxis: reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it. . . . To achieve this goal, the oppressed must confront reality critically, simultaneously objectifying and acting upon that reality.

We should remember, however, previous generations also posited that education can and should be used as a vehicle for social transformation. For example, in his provocatively titled volume, *Dare the Schools Build a New Social Order*, George Counts (1932, p. 3) comments:

We are convinced that education is the one unfailing remedy for every ill to which [we are] subject, whether it be . . . war, poverty . . . injustice . . . [or] race hatred. . . . We even speak glibly and often about the general reconstruction of society through the school. We cling to this faith in spite of the fact that the very period in which our troubles have multiplied so rapidly has witnessed an unprecedented expansion of organized education.

A year later, in his book, *The Mis-Education of the Negro*, Carter Woodson (1933, p. 145) poses—and then answers—the question about whether teachers can “revolutionize the social order”: “But can we expect teachers to revolutionize the social order for the good of the community? Indeed we must expect this very thing. The education system of a country is worthless unless it accomplishes this task” (see also Apple, 2013, p. 42).

When engaging in critical praxis to foster social change and transformation, educators need to move beyond the classroom (Ginsburg, 1995). For example, Nicholas Fox (2012, p. 15) suggests that classroom activities are not enough:

As much as we talk politics with our students, read political novels, and highlight the activism of the past, the walls of the classroom present a problem for radical teachers. Our meetings host passionate discussions where students begin to tackle assumptions, dismantle ideas of privilege, even critique capitalism. But when class ends, what happens to the political fervor? Where does that revolutionary spark go? Does it spread out into the streets? Or does it end up at the bottom of backpacks, forgotten like last week's homework?

Similarly, Jean Anyon (2009, p. 392) advises colleagues who are engaged in social justice education not to limit their—and their students'—actions to the context of the school:

[A]lthough critical educators do well to share with students information about systemic causes of subordination, that is not enough to get students involved in the struggle for social justice. . . . By giving students direct experience with social justice work, we can educate them to appreciate and value those forms of democratic process that are aimed specifically at creating a more equitable society—public contention toward progressive social change.

At the same time, though, many scholars have concluded that education institutions often play the opposite role; that is, they contribute to economic, political, and social/cultural reproduction of existing human relations, nationally (see Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Morrow & Torres, 1995) and internationally (Brown & Laudner, 1997; Altbach & Kelly, 1978). Some researchers have identified cases in which students or teachers resist these reproductive processes (Ginsburg, 1995; Giroux, 1983). Nevertheless, education seems more often to be a reproductive force—providing unequal access to learning opportunities, preserving structures that limit at least some groups from realizing their human rights, and transmitting ideologies that legitimate structures or discourage people from trying to transform them (Tomasevski, 2006). The point is that education is *not* neutral, as Richard Schaul (1970/2000, p. 34) so nicely articulates in his introduction to Paulo Freire's volume, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*:

There is no such thing as a *neutral* educational process. Education either functions as an instrument that is used to facilitate the integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity to it, *or* it becomes "the practice of freedom," the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world.

Recognizing that the content, processes, and outcomes of education are not neutral, we have decided to focus this special issue of *Current Issues in Comparative Education* (CICE) on "education for social change and transformation." We have sought to include in this volume case studies that illuminate a range of initiatives in various educational programs and institutions and in a variety of contexts.

Giving attention to these case studies is important because critical educators often toil in isolation or with support from only a few colleagues, striving for change—one lesson, one student, one classroom, one school, or one community at a time. They refuse to accept the idea that the “is-ness” of our present condition makes us incapable of striving for the eternal “ought-ness” that confronts us (King, Jr., 2001). Educators laboring to promote change and transformation through education represent possibilities for wider systemic change at the national, regional, and global levels, working from the bottom up.

These case studies illuminate different conceptions of how education can be used to promote progressive social change—and, indeed, signal different notions of what progressive social change means. Each of the case studies also illustrates some degree of success in achieving program goals, while simultaneously identifying the challenges faced by those involved. Their stories encourage us to remember that critical praxis is both absolutely essential and profoundly difficult.

In her article, “Theatre-Arts Pedagogy for Social Justice,” **Anne Hickling-Hudson** analyzes the socio-educational significance of a theatre arts approach to learning for young adults from less-privileged communities in Jamaica. She discusses how the pedagogy employed by the Area Youth Foundation (AYF) in its workshops, rehearsals, and performances is a form of critical praxis, informed by Paulo Freire’s pedagogy of the oppressed and Augusto Boal’s theatre of the oppressed. Based on interviews with AYF’s leader and some of the participants, Anne describes how violence and oppressive conditions become the focus of their critical analysis and their artistic expression. The workshops provide space for sharing and analyzing their personal stories, which subsequently inform the content of plays and other public performances. She documents the powerful impact that the AYF experience has in developing the participants’ humanist, epistemic, technical, and public literacies. Many of the youth acquire knowledge and skills that are not available through the formal education system in Jamaica and that open up career opportunities. Equally important, they also gain deeper understandings of their social context, learn strategies for reducing inter-group antagonism and violence, and develop commitments to challenge injustices in their society.

In her article, “Promoting Change within the Constraints of Conflict,” **Karen Ross** explores the approach to transformative education utilized by Sadaka Reut, a binational civil society organization in Israel that works with Jewish and Palestinian youth. She draws on interviews and observations focused mainly on activities organized for Jewish Israeli youth, prior to their involvement in joint activities with their Palestinian Israeli peers. She describes how the program seeks to educate youth for social change by using their personal experiences as the basis for initiating discussion and then guiding participants to see broader cultural and structural features of society in which these personal experiences are embedded. She presents qualitative evidence that the youth develop more complex and critical views of their lived experiences, though it is less clear to what extent they develop the commitment and capability to pursue cultural and structural changes that seem warranted given their emergent critiques of society. Karen also calls attention to the dilemma faced by Sadaka Reut. In order to attract participation from a broad group of Jewish Israelis, the staff—Jewish as well as Palestinian Israelis—have felt the need to organize many of the activities separately for Jewish and Palestinian Israeli youth and to create a

public image of the organization as not focused solely on the Jewish-Palestinian conflict or on binational partnership as a strategy for change.

In their article, “Promoting Civic Engagement in Schools in Non-Democratic Settings,” **Maryam Abolfazli** and **Maryam Alemi** analyze the Online School of Civic Education. This initiative, funded by the U.S. government and organized by an NGO based in the United States, seeks to encourage teachers in Iran to exchange ideas toward changing their classroom practices to encourage students’ active learning, reflection, and critical thinking on topics in civic education. The authors state that Iranian authorities define citizenship as devotion to religious ideology and obedience to political/religious elites. The article indicates that the participants in the Online School courses are diverse in terms of their ethnic/religious identities, their geographic locations, and the subjects they teach. We learn that pedagogical strategies encouraged by the project organizers or shared by on-line participants are implemented with varying degrees of success. It appears that teachers participating in the course are enthusiastic about the strategies they learn, and they report that many of their students appreciate the different way of being involved in the classroom. Given the nature of the case study presented, however, it is not clear in what ways the Iranian students’ experience in the particular class affect what they try to do in other classes they have, let alone whether the experience leads them to act differently in their families and communities.

In their article, “Teacher Education for Social Change,” **Scott Ritchie**, **Neporcha Cone**, **Sohyun An**, and **Patricia Bullock** present findings from a qualitative practitioner-research case study undertaken at a large public university in the southeastern United States. The authors report on their efforts as faculty members teaching four content methods courses (language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies) to a cohort of 16 primary school teacher education students in the semester prior to their student teaching. They designed the class sessions, readings, and field experiences of these courses to emphasize social justice dimensions of teaching rather than just focusing on skills and strategies. Drawing on focus group interviews, class discussions, and students’ written reflections on readings and field assignments, the authors indicate that students from a politically conservative community came to recognize the racial and social class inequities in American society and the role that teaching and schooling can play to reinforce or reduce these inequities. The participating students also began to consider what actions they could take—as teachers—to improve things, at least for their own students. The authors, however, acknowledge that while their collaboration with the four courses likely increased the impact of their teachings (compared to prior, more isolated efforts), there was a need for a more comprehensive approach in the College and in the schools where field experiences occur. This would reinforce students’ commitment and capacity to pursue social change in their classrooms and perhaps within the community, at least locally.

In their article, focused on “Re-framing, Re-imagining, and Re-tooling Curricula from the Grassroots,” **Isaura B. Pulido**, **Gabriel Alejandro Cortez**, **Ann Aviles de Bradley**, **Anton Miglietta**, and **David Stovall** explore the work of the Chicago Grassroots Curriculum Taskforce (CGCT). This group, based in the city of Chicago in the United States, produces curricula that more adeptly capture the cultural, economic, and political realities of students who attend the city’s public schools. As members of the CGCT, the coauthors examine the collaborative processes involving parents, teachers, students, community members/activists, and educational

researchers to produce CGTC's first unit, "Urban Renewal or Urban Removal." A series of meetings and workshops involving more than 155 people resulted in a unit curriculum map (content outline, essential questions, key projects, and learning activities). Subsequently, 22 classroom educators, 20 artists, 18 displaced residents, 15 college students, 12 high school students, five housing activists, and four university faculty contributed poems, stories, and visuals for the unit. The article also explores how faculty members and students in the College of Education at Northeastern Illinois University became involved in the CGCT. For example, courses in the teacher education and administrator education program made use of and extended the content of the "Urban Renewal and Urban Removal" unit. The article does not document how the experiences may have changed participants' perspectives, let alone how they may have become involved in collective action aimed at changing the conditions of life in inner city Chicago. However, it does provide evidence that people can be mobilized to discuss and reflect critically on aspects of their context in ways that likely not only increased their insights but also challenged at least some of their assumptions about why things are the way they are.

In their article, "Education Community Dialogue towards Building a Policy Agenda for Adult Education," **Tatiana Lotierzo Hirano**, **Giovanna Modé Magalhães**, **Camilla Croso**, **Laura Giannecchini**, and **Fabíola Munhoz** share the experience of the "Amplifying Voices" initiative. This initiative, which is organized by the Latin American Campaign for the Right to Education, conducts interviews with students involved in adult education programs in a range of countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. Their stories, their concerns, and their program and policy advice are then uploaded to a website, as well as presented to policy makers and other stakeholders at various public events. The article presents excerpts from rich narratives elicited via interviews. It is clear that those whose voices have been recorded and broadcast value education very deeply and also have cogent recommendations for how adult education could be improved for them and for others who did not benefit fully from schooling as children. Less clear for readers is how their voices are heard by decision makers and how the structured reflection on their personal experience encourages those interviewed to become more active in individual or collective struggles to improve the education system and the political and economic institutions that affect their lives.

In their article, "Chilean Student Movements," **Cristián Bellei** and **Cristian Cabalin** examine two recent mobilizations initiated by students in Chile that challenged the neoliberal education policies of that country. They discuss the 2006 "Penguin Revolution," led by secondary school students, and the issues and events of the 2011 "Chilean Winter," led by university students. In both cases the students (and, later, other societal actors) protested the extreme degree of privatization and marketization of the Chilean educational system. In this article we learn little about how and why students came to critique these aspects of the education system which survived—and indeed were strengthened—after the end of the Pinochet dictatorship. However, Bellei and Cabalin inform us about how the activist students used a variety of strategies and media to educate and mobilize others to join marches, rallies, and other forms of political action. We also come to see how governing elites were forced to act, although such actions did not fully respond to the demands of the protesters. The article helps us understand how students can be highly relevant political actors in educational as well as broader social policy debates.

Often academic spaces fail to make room for voices of practitioners or activists. So, it is significant that this special issue of an open access journal presents a collection of voices of academics, practitioners, and activists. The voices highlighted through these case studies are significant in two main senses. First, they underscore a conception of education as a holistic endeavor that engages both the learning institution as well as the community in which it is embedded. The successes as well as the challenges inherent in these initiatives highlight the need for coalition and consensus building within learning institutions as well as between those who are involved in these institutions and others who live and work in the surrounding communities. Second, the inclusion of this range of actors recognizes the importance of allowing voices to speak that are ordinarily unheard, excluded, or silenced in debates about schooling—for instance, about how best to educate all, not just some, in our societies.

By broadcasting the voices of those directly engaged in the struggle to improve conditions, we make important strides towards breaking down barriers that separate people, we connect the disparate threads of endeavors aimed at a common purpose, and we illuminate possibilities for larger-scale change that is informed from the bottom up. By capturing the rich complexity of these “small stories,” we answer the call by Apple et al. (2007) to serve as critical educators by challenging what counts as “research” through acting as “secretaries” to those groups of people or social movements who are engaged in challenging structural inequalities.

Notes:

- [1]. As Spring (2000) and Tomasevski (2006) detail, the idea that education is a human right has been reaffirmed subsequently in other international declarations, covenants, and conventions, including: the UNESCO Convention Against Discrimination in Education (1960), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1981), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989).
- [2]. Additionally, the Report indicates that the private sector is not making a significant contribution: “Private organizations contribute to EFA in several ways, but . . . their support is equivalent to 5% of what was spent by official donors on education in 2010—and of that only a small share is spent on EFA priorities” (UNESCO, 2012, p. 169; see also van Fleet, 2011).
- [3]. For instance, Article III: Universalizing Access and Promoting Equity of the Jomtien *World Declaration on Education for All* states: “Basic education should be provided to all children, youth and adults. To this end, basic education services of *quality* should be expanded and consistent measures must be taken to reduce disparities” (Inter-Agency Commission, 1990). And point seven of the *Dakar Framework for Action* identifies as a commitment “ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete, free and compulsory primary education of good *quality*” (UNESCO, 2000).
- [4]. However, Patti Lather (2001, p. 192) encourages critical educators to avoid assuming that existing conceptualizations provide a definite portrait of the nature of the transformed society: “As an arena of practice, critical pedagogy might serve a transvaluation of praxis if it can find a way to participate in the struggle of these forces as we move toward an experience of the promise that is unforeseeable from the perspective of our present conceptual frameworks.” Similarly, Guajardo et al. (2008, p. 16) suggest that “we must be patient with

people, respect them, and meet them where they are,” as Myles Horton (Adams & Horton, 1975) professed. We see this change as a long, sustained effort where the work must focus on both micro- and macro-levels . . . we work for local change, but a change that is couched in broader social, cultural, and economic contexts.”

- [5]. Human rights can be grouped in the following categories (see also Marshall, 1964): economic/welfare rights, political/civil rights, and social/cultural rights (see Ginsburg et al., 2010, p. 2).

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Theatre-Arts Pedagogy for Social Justice: Case Study of the Area Youth Foundation in Jamaica

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In this paper I describe and analyse the socio-educational significance of a theatre arts approach to learning for young adults in Jamaica, implemented by the Area Youth Foundation (AYF). Briefly outlining the genesis and development of the AYF, I provide snapshots of the experiences and destinations of some of its young participants. The paper discusses AYF workshops to show how the pedagogy was shaped by the expressive arts and based on the critical praxis approach systematized by Paulo Freire in adult education and Augusto Boal in theatre. Based on interviews with AYF's leader and some of the learners, I discuss how the foundation's motto, "Youth Empowerment Through the Arts," is played out in workshops and creative productions that are simultaneously learner-driven and teacher-guided, with the powerful impact of inspiring politically thoughtful creativity and skills in youths from less-privileged communities.

This paper is a case study of a theatre-arts approach to learning for young adults in Jamaica, implemented by the Area Youth Foundation (AYF), a non-profit, non-government organisation. The essay is based on qualitative methods that describe and reflect on the socio-educational significance of the pedagogy and learning practised in AYF. Following a case study approach proposed by Robert Yin (1984), I study the phenomenon within its real-life context, when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are fluid, using multiple sources of evidence. I first set the Jamaican context that frames the work and development of the AYF. The content of the case is drawn from information that I obtained from AYF participants—students and the executive director/leader—through semi-structured interviews, conversations, and observation of their workshops and rehearsals. Themes that arose from the transcribed material are described and analysed. I relate this to my theoretical understandings of literacies (Hickling-Hudson, 2007) and Freirean pedagogy (Hickling-Hudson, 1988), and I apply these to explore the significance of the work of AYF.

Stating my background, in the tradition of qualitative research, I start by indicating that I was introduced to the AYF by Sheila Lowe Graham, a Jamaican friend and colleague who established AYF and leads the implementation of its work. Over several visits to Jamaica between 2000 and 2012, I was excited to see more of the work of the group, for it seemed to be establishing the kind of alternative approach to education that I knew was desperately needed. My interest in this field stems from my Caribbean origins, upbringing, and experience as an educator working in the 1970s and 1980s in the less-privileged schools, teachers colleges, and adult education programs in Jamaica and Grenada (see Evans, 2009; Hickling-Hudson, 1995). My commitment gradually became one of developing a postcolonial approach to curriculum

design and pedagogy (Hickling-Hudson, 2011), postcolonial in the sense of celebrating the culture and interests of my students and challenging the legacies of colonial oppression.[1]

Context: A Socio-Political Framework for Understanding the AYP

The effects of economic and educational underdevelopment are clearly visible in Jamaica, a society that has been wrestling with complex decolonisation and development issues since gaining independence from Britain in 1962. On one level, the society of 2.7 million people seems to put forward a successful face of thriving modern sector enterprises and a prosperous standard of living for affluent groups. But below that surface, the majority is affected by a downward spiral of educational and economic ineffectiveness that contributes to a 20.1% illiteracy rate (Jamaican Foundation for Lifelong Learning, 2008), a high unemployment rate of 14.2% in 2012 (Statistical Institute of Jamaica, 2013), a high poverty rate, and a high rate of crime (United Nations, 2007). Hostile rivalry between supporters of Jamaica's two political parties (a legacy of the British "Westminster" system) has turned the poorer inner city areas of Kingston, the capital, into dangerous places for their inhabitants. Party supporters and drug "dons" on both sides obtain guns, mainly from the USA, which are often used against the rival party or gang. The murder rate averages 60 per 100,000 inhabitants—the highest in the Caribbean and the third highest in the world (*Caribbean Journal*, 2012). Many of the murders occur in the "garrison" communities of inner-city Kingston, so named because of the political rivalries that force the divided residents to barricade themselves against perceived enemies on the other side.

The movement of decolonisation in Caribbean societies, as in many developing regions, has been characterised by contradictions: on the one hand, the struggles of the people to address the injustices of the deeply stratified society inherited from British colonialism, and on the other hand, continuation of the privilege, elitism, exploitation, and deprivation that are features of these injustices. Much of the crime and violence in Jamaican society stems from these deep divisions.

The socio-educational status quo also reveals divisions and associated contradictions. Excellent schooling is available in Jamaica and most of the Caribbean. It is the kind of schooling that is world-class in content and prepares students to excel in difficult academic examinations and move into higher education and high-status employment. But it is only accessible to a minority, as shown by figures describing examination performance in the Caribbean's high-status school leaving examination, the Caribbean Secondary Examination Certificate (CSEC). A small percentage of school-leavers earn "passing" grades in five or more subjects, qualifying them to pursue university studies and professional careers. Most students fail to attain five passes, and even worse, the majority of the 15-19 age cohort does not even sit for the examination.[2] The destinations of the latter group of young people include unemployment (37.0% among the 15-24 age group in January 2013, according to the Statistical Institute of Jamaica), subsistence living, or technical and vocational training and middle to low-level jobs. The low educational levels and high unemployment rate among a large minority of young people limits their socio-economic chances, and in the words of a UN report: "makes female youth vulnerable to sexual exploitation and adolescent pregnancy and puts male youth in an extremely vulnerable position, which might lead to participation in criminal gangs" (UNFPA, 2011).

AYF participants, ranging in age from 16-25, are the victims of the inadequate and inappropriate educational provision in marginalised schools that is imposed on most young Jamaicans who come from impoverished urban and agricultural communities (Evans, 2001; Hickling-Hudson, 2004). Some who join Area Youth are non-literate or have low levels of literacy or a sub-standard education. Many dropped out of school, and others left without completing examinations that offer entry into jobs or further education. They are unemployed or semi-employed at minimum wage. They come from an environment of economic precariousness, political division, physical danger, and frequent trouble with the police (see Levy, 2009). Some youth also have to deal with other types of trauma, such as hunger and physical and sexual abuse.[3] One of the AYF participants whom I interviewed recounts traumatic events in her school environments:

I went to X Primary, then Y Primary [naming two inner-city schools]. It was pure violence. We used to hear shots, and I vividly remember when I saw a woman lying in the road dying, with the blood running from her . . . We were afraid, as girls, of being pulled into a dark building. Mummy had to take me aside and counsel me what to do in case . . . Then I got to go to Z Technical High School. There was a lot of violence. The school needed a back wall—it led into (naming the city streets) and men would come in freely. I remember a schoolboy dying there, at school. It seemed to me that that came from an ongoing problem. There was a little fat boy and they would take away his lunch money every day and he would have no lunch. I'm sure he didn't mean to stab them, but he did and the guy died, and he's now in prison. If you saw anything you couldn't tell, for they would call you an informer. I remember another person being chopped and the blood spraying—I cried and cried.

Framing and Designing the Study

It is against this background that I discuss in this article the value of the educational approach of the AYF. Drawing on a socio-political theory of literacies that I put forward in earlier work to analyse the quality of adult education (Hickling-Hudson, 1995, 2013), I observe that the pedagogical approach of the AYF sets out to develop in its young participants the types of “literacies” in which they have been short-changed by the substandard schooling they receive in Jamaica. The AYF develops these literacies by utilising a unique style of pedagogy,[4] some aspects of which draw on the dialogic learning approach popularized by Paulo Freire (1972).

I argue that “literacies” may be understood as sets of competencies, text-based knowledges, and interactional behaviours that are the foundation of one's level of social influence. The quality of an education system may be determined by how well or how poorly it develops these literacies, categorised as:

- *Humanist literacy*: the interpersonal and intrapersonal skills and knowledge of self and other in relationships in different contexts;
- *Epistemic literacy*: knowledge of content and discourse in academic disciplines;
- *Technical literacy*: the technical skills and knowledge of working procedurally; and
- *Public literacy*: competence in contributing to the public sphere and deploying public structures for the social good.

On visits to Jamaica in 2000 and 2004, I received permission from the AYF project leader to study aspects of the project and had the opportunity to visit AYF headquarters. I was introduced to group members working on costumes, scripts, sets, and other theatre activities, and over a few days, four males and six females agreed to talk with me about their experiences in the project and more generally. These were “opportunity interviews,” conversations with AYF members who happened to be at the site when I visited and had the time and inclination to talk with me.

I used a mixture of tape recordings, for those who were comfortable being recorded, and notes. I asked my interviewees how they came to join Area Youth, what they liked doing in the group, and how it had influenced their lives. I also visited some of the AYF workshops and rehearsals for a drama production to observe the teaching and learning process between the young people and their facilitators.

In the years that followed, I went when I could to AYF workshops and performances, and continued talking with project leader and director Sheila Lowe Graham about the work of the group. This article, therefore, is in the genre of a reflective case study, examining the case of an educational program in social context, and reflecting on its significance in terms of pedagogy and social justice.

Development of a Theatre Arts Program for Inner-City Jamaican Youth

The AYF theatre arts education program, which began in 1997, throws into sharp profile the economic, political, and educational context of Jamaica. First, it reveals that lives of the young participants embody not only the injustices of Jamaican society, which relegate many people to acute economic and educational disadvantage, but also its warring politics. Second, the very high level of education of the founders and implementers of the program contrasts with the disadvantaged circumstances of the young participants.

Sheila Lowe Graham, founder and leader of the AYF, did her first degree in English, French, and Spanish literatures at the University of the West Indies in Jamaica, and holds a Master of Arts in drama from Catholic University of America, Washington D.C., U.S.A. She worked as a Senior Specialist in the Department of Cultural Affairs and then as Caribbean Coordinator in the Executive Secretariat for Education, Science and Culture at the Organization of American States, headquartered in Washington D.C. AYF co-founders Winston “Bello” Bell and Owen “Blacka” Ellis are both theatre arts graduates of the Cultural Training Centre, now called the Edna Manley College of the Visual and Performing Arts, in Kingston, Jamaica. “Bello and Blacka” were, at the time, a popular comedy duo. The occasional teachers and guest speakers recruited for AYF workshops are also highly qualified. The facilitators of learning in the AYF are in a social segment of the society that positions them to exert influence in creating, implementing, and sustaining social initiatives like this program.

Although instructors receive an honorarium when there is a funded project, the nature of the work is mainly voluntary. Graham has been able to sustain her voluntary work managing the AYF over nearly two decades. Understanding her roles as founder, executive director,

facilitator, and project leader is central to understanding the AYF and its strengths and limitations as an example of socio-educational change.

Graham's commitment to drama and its possibilities for improving education in Jamaica led to the establishment of the youth group, which evolved out of a specific theatre project (see Graham, 2007). As the managing director of "The Company Limited," an innovative amateur theatre group, Graham and fellow dramatists aimed to produce Nigerian Nobel Laureate Wole Soyinka's play "The Beatification of Area Boy." This play, in which young people are led into criminality by a charismatic leader in Lagos, Nigeria, echoed the situation in Kingston. The theatre that was selected for the production was a 200 year-old Victorian playhouse situated in a once-elegant section of Kingston that had degenerated into an urban ghetto embroiled in turf wars.

The theme of the play led the producers to see the possibilities of engaging the at-risk young people in surrounding areas in an experiment with using drama-in-education methods to challenge the situation of political conflict between neighbouring garrison communities in inner-city Kingston. She explained: "Our overall goal was to give youth in rival zones of the city an opportunity to work together—to create understanding across chasms of misunderstanding that were literally deadly: cross the street and you could be dead" (2004 interview with Graham).

In the months leading up to the production, Graham and her colleagues recruited 100 teenagers and young adults to participate in the adventure of theatre education. They worked with Graham and her team to learn to collaborate in creating performance pieces out of their life experiences and their hopes for the future. These pieces became the material with which the leaders created a revue they called "Border Connection," which was performed for Soyinka in lieu of a traditional audition. This musical revue became so popular that it was requested and performed for several years in communities around Jamaica, attracting large audiences. The theme of "Border Connection" addressed the violence and social decay of neglected communities, asking, in the first half: "How we come to this?" The second half of the revue projected positive solutions: "Yes, there is better way."

Of the 70 who performed in the "Border Connection" audition, 30 stayed on to work in "Beatification." The playwright himself spent several weeks in Jamaica to direct the play (see Soyinka, 2006). An important achievement was for the leaders to collaborate with Jamaica's leading vocational training institution, HEART/NTA,[5] in making the production a special training project for the entertainment industry. In that context trainees were assigned to various departments of the production. Twelve were selected by Soyinka to act in the play. Others were apprenticed to the experts who were contracted to work on the production. They learned skills as lighting and sound technicians, as well as skills in stage management, set and costume design and construction, and craft service. Of that first cohort, many continued into careers in those areas (2012 interview with Graham). The play ran for many weeks, enjoying box-office success.

Another popular revue they wrote and produced was the reggae musical, "Link Up," which was so successful that the group was invited and funded to perform it in the UK and other

European countries. After the first year, the “Area Boy” project was developed into a registered foundation to facilitate fundraising and financial management, and was renamed the Area Youth Foundation (AYF). Attracting sufficient funds to run the organization was difficult, and at one point demise seemed likely. Area Youth members were determined that the project would continue. The group produced a newsletter, worked out strategies for its future development, and asked the facilitators to continue to provide pedagogical and organisational support. This worked, and the Foundation is still in operation today.

The diversity of the audiences that attended AYF performances illustrates the range of people the group reached. The production of Wole Soyinka’s play was marketed to the ticket-purchasing, arts-loving, theatre-going people from middle and upper income groups who were attracted by the expectation of an excellent production of work by a Nobel Laureate. However, when the group performed in disadvantaged urban (and a few rural) communities, the audiences were mostly the people who lived there. Some performances were sponsored by different types of organizations. For example, a large public relations agency sponsored the staging of a special Christmas celebration performance in Kingston for their clients, who were some of the biggest private sector firms in Jamaica. The group was also commissioned to perform for the prestigious annual “Norman Washington Manley Award for Excellence” celebrating one of Jamaica’s National Heroes. This was attended by persons from the highest levels of government and the private sector. For ten successive years the group performed at impresario and philanthropist Chris Blackwell’s Oscar Night party at Strawberry Hill, an exclusive hotel in Jamaica’s Blue Mountains. The organisers of the event ran a lottery as to the Oscar winners, and proceeds were donated to AYF. On one occasion, the human rights organization “Jamaicans for Justice,” campaigning for state forces to be charged for killing a mentally ill youth, invited the group to perform on a street corner. This performance was attended by civil society activists, the media, and community residents. On another occasion, the group performed for HRH Prince Charles when he visited Kingston in 2001.[6]

In spite of its sterling work with up to 3,000 young people over 16 years,[7] AYF’s existence has always been precarious and dependent on fundraising. In the absence of government funding, AYF’s director has to devote much time to applying for grants from funding agencies, and carrying out other types of fundraising necessary to sustain the not-for-profit program. Over the years, the AYF has received sponsorship from various organisations to help it continue. Some of the funds went towards paying school fees for those youth who wanted to go back to high school to take exams they had not been able to take while in school. The grant agencies from which funds are sought may or may not decide to give temporary support to the project. The uncertainty of this financial situation is the most difficult problem AYF has to tackle (see Yard Edge Blog, 2008).

In the organisational structure of the AYF, the facilitator-teacher team shares responsibilities. Graham leads and organises the work of the Foundation and secures funding. The work of teaching drama skills, producing shows, and rehearsing with the actors is shared by Graham and others, including at various times Winston Bell and Owen Ellis, previously mentioned colleagues who are skilled musicians and dramatists. Recently, an alumnus of the AYF, James Bell, took the role of general and financial manager. Facilitator-teachers, some of whom are AYF alumni, work as workshop animators and participate in the creation and delivery of outreach activities.

The foundation's motto, "Youth Empowerment through the Arts," is demonstrated by the AYF's activities. The bedrock of all of the arts-based work in the AYF is the pedagogical process that helps the young people develop their life skills and their "literacies"—an issue I will develop further. In summary, however, it can be observed that the young people's learning involves a variety of social, educational, and artistic activities:

- writing songs and creating music videos;
- producing musical theatre performances both in Jamaica and overseas;
- working on film sets such as with the U.S. film *Third World Cop*;
- making video productions of local docudramas and documentaries;
- producing a set of "photo-novella" booklets about issues that deeply concern them (HIV/AIDS, unemployment, and drug and child abuse);
- sharing their newly-learned skills to assist development in other inner-city communities;
- training in entrepreneurship and life skills; and
- providing technical assistance and advice to members who wish to start their own businesses.

Learning Journeys in AYF: "It's a Home to Us"

The AYF project has had a deep personal impact on the young participants. From interviewing them, I learned that many see the project as an important source of stability, confidence, and growth. Participants referred to AYF as a "second home," and "the best thing I've ever done." Some talked about the new skills and knowledge they had acquired through the AYF. Others spoke of how AYF enabled them to go on for higher education, and others highlighted how AYF encouraged them to be non-violent.

During interviews, Graham informed me of the events and careers in which some of the young participants were involved after they completed their sojourn with AYF. As she explained, most participants had grown up in inner-city Kingston communities they call "war zones," referring to conflicts that originated between the two major political parties in Jamaica but are more likely to be between rival criminal gangs. Most participants went to government schools (new secondary schools, comprehensive schools, and the "senior primary" grades of all-age schools), which constituted the lower strata of schools in the Jamaican school system.

Some of the AYF participants I interviewed had happy memories, but their overall assessment of schooling was negative. Some said that they had wasted much of their time there, learning little. Others mentioned that their parents could not afford to keep them at school to complete the school-leaving exams. Some felt that they had been short-changed by the poor quality of the education they received. Some explained that their learning suffered because of frequent changes of school as their families were repeatedly forced to flee when community violence flared up. While some had taken school-leaving exams, they had attained few passes. Others had low levels of formal literacy. Most of them had no prospects or hopes of employment, and were just hanging around the inner-city streets with little to do.

Here is how two of the participants, Kenny and Mike, described their background and experience in AYF, focusing on the technical knowledge and skills they learned (names have been changed to protect privacy).

Kenny: I went and learn a trade--woodwork at a furniture company. I learnt a good amount, but I never stayed there, because of a fight in the men's room. . . . Me find out sey me have a talent in music—DJ, to make songs and shows. I had a singing talent from I was about 12. My cousin had a component set, and every night we would experiment with it . . . I saw Area Youth on TV but I never knew which part it was. They advertised a meeting and I went. I have a deep voice and I sing in the bass line. I've been in the group for three years, since it started. I learn a lot from the movie project. I saw what the camera assistant needed, and they put me to help. I had to deliver to them what they wanted.

Mike: I left school before I graduated, and went to learn a trade. I did cabinet-making, with Kenny. . . . Then we saw the “Area Boy” program advertised. I went to audition and sang for them. I've been with the group from the start. After the play, we got a chance to see how a movie is created. We worked on the set with *Third World Cop*. This group, Area Youth, has given us a lot of skills in theatre. I'm still not a big-big actor but I can handle myself—there's always a lot of things to do. That's why we don't want to leave this group—it's a home to us.

This excerpt from Janet highlights a learning journey that valued the opportunities provided in AYF seminars for personal and inter-personal reflection, growth, and conflict resolution. Her increased self-esteem set the foundation for her to take her love of drama further.

Janet: I was at home doing nothing and just used to sit on the street side with my friends. Then Bello [Winston Bell], Sheila and Blacka [Owen Ellis], they were in the park. And they announce that if you want to join Area Youth, you just have to sign a form. And I sign and bring it in, and I got chosen to be in the group. We did a lot of exercises at the Ward Theatre. We learn how to trust and things like that. We really learn a lot. I was so aggressive. I was so ignorant: if anybody said anything to me. I was, like, ready to jump at them . . . They (AYF tutors) teach me a lot of things, like self-esteem. I believe in myself now, that you can be anything you want to be, but don't let anybody come in your way, and don't let a negative vibe come in your way. They taught us how to live together, show respect, love one another. They learn us how to resolve conflict, not just jump at people. You get to know that you can resolve conflict in different kinds of ways, without fighting and quarrelling. It really do a lot for me. From primary school I love drama, and this gives me the opportunity now to go further, to do something with it . . . I love this group a lot. It's three years now I've been here.

In the quote below, Nadine emphasizes how being a member of AYF gave her a direction in life based on the theatre skills she was learning, plus information about the possibilities of further education. She also comments on the powerful and calming social effect of the AYF for other people.

Nadine: How I got into Area Youth—I saw the ads on TV and decided to try out the audition. And it’s the best thing I’ve ever done. It gives my life a direction. I wanted to go to a college, but didn’t know how or what to do. But working with Blacka [Owen Ellis], who teaches at the college, opened my eyes to those possibilities. I’m doing makeup in our Film Factory. One day, I want to be a production assistant. Area Youth has a powerful social effect. Sometimes we do workshops in our communities, and people have told us that it helped them see things about violence and encouraged them to stop it. I try to be calm and non-violent now, although as a child I was violent: I would buck you and crab you up, scrape you with my nails. But my mother prayed about it, and I grew out of that behaviour.

Marlene’s reminiscences feature the role of the AYF in helping her uncover her hidden talents, as well as a deeper self-confidence that made her realise she didn’t have to “settle for a desk job.” She stresses the social learning that had been important for her and others, describing how the AYF members gradually came to trust each other and passed on techniques that helped their neighbourhood communities change their hostile behaviour and strive to achieve their yearning for peace.

Marlene: I graduated from secondary school and I wanted to be a secretary, but when I became part of this group I discovered I had more in me. I discovered I could write, sing, dance. I write beautiful poetry. Being in the group showed me that I didn’t have to settle for a desk job. Mr. Bell, Sheila Graham,[8] and Mr. Ellis helped me to develop skills and confidence. I’ve even been writing film scripts. How I joined them (AYF) was I heard they were recruiting. When I went, there was a long line—hundreds. But I got in. When we started the exercises we found that all of us in the different communities had one thing in common—we wanted peace between the communities, we wanted to bridge the gaps. There were community rivalries and that caused segregation and “don-ship.” We wanted to try and eradicate those borders. Now people from Matthews Lane, South Side, and Tel Aviv are like a family, but before we wouldn’t talk to each other. We couldn’t socialise, because we were called “informers” and could be killed. In Area Youth we come up with dramas based on incidents in the community. People remember the dramas and it helps them change their behaviour. If a brother falls down, don’t laugh at him—pick him up. Our group has changed the social behaviour of some of the communities. Even the baddest man want peace—he want a night’s rest that he can sleep without a weapon in his hand.

Most AYF members who complete the program have been able to achieve employment that would not have been possible without their AYF learning journeys. The AYF encouraged and assisted many of its members to complete their schooling. Some participants went on to tertiary education and now have successful careers in Jamaica. Omaall, for example, earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the University of the West Indies, and is now a teacher, performance poet, recording artist, and film maker. Fogo, who owns his own business, is a lighting designer and does lighting for shows and special events. Claudine is an airline agent in Montego Bay. A

few members achieved notable success overseas. Andre graduated from Columbus State University, Georgia. Craig has his own band, “In Transit,” based in Orlando, Florida. Ricardo (also known as Billy) graduated from the University of Wolverhampton (UK) in 2012, and is still broadcasting as “D.J. Chill” from the Midlands. He now works as a team leader in The Prince's Trust Team Programme at Birmingham Metropolitan College. Marlon is an actor who played in London's West End in the musical, “The Harder They Come.” Jessica, after playing Nala in the European production of “The Lion King,” went on to act in another production in Germany. Ricky has his own production company, writes his own plays, and is an actor in London.

The participation of another AYF member called Marlon in the program motivated him to take a path that led from non-literacy, to catch-up schooling and vocational qualifications. According to his posting on Facebook:

Marlon “Seek” Smith, August 2012

Ok face book friends time to let you all into my world:

- I learned to read in 2001. Since then I have graduated from Loyalist College, which is one of the best colleges in Ontario, Canada. In 2010 I went and got my high school equivalency diploma, following up in 2011 with a certificate in the skill trade of Construction Renovation Techniques.
- I was one of the luckiest people to have been a part of the Area Youth Foundation family. Because the love that I felt was like no other, I will always refer to those people as my Area Youth Foundation family.
- I think of myself as a boy trying to understand what a man is. My Area Youth Foundation family has helped me to stand on the road to that path.

However, even the AYF experience does not prevent some participants from suffering from problems of violence and upheavals in Jamaican society. Sheila Graham knows of five AYF members, ranging in age from 13 to 18, who have been shot and killed, and she says the lives of other young participants are being distorted by violence. For example, Jimmy has been unable to continue attending school, despite his desire to do so. At the age of 13, he became so motivated by the AYF project that he applied to go back to school and started attending a technical high school. He had to drop out because it is too unsafe to cross “enemy territory” to get to school. Tony is on bail after having been framed on a charge of illegal possession of a firearm. His case has been postponed several times because the police, having no evidence against him, fail to show up at court each time the case is called. Peter has been in jail since 2008, pending a hearing, because a woman told the police that he murdered her son. She knows he didn't, but according to her: “Somebody has to pay.” He was recently released after being held for years without charge.

Pedagogy and Learning in the Area Youth Foundation

AYF program pedagogy is built on a combination of insights from selected educators (see endnote 4). From my observation, aspects of the program particularly resonate with the learner-centred approach of Freirean pedagogy, and with the interactive drama approach of Augusto Boal. Paulo Freire views knowledge as a process of critical praxis, made and remade after reflection. He practiced his deeply held belief that knowledge must be dialogically created from

interaction between learners and teachers. In this counterpoint to a colonial model of education, the teacher's style is dialogue with the learners rather than an authoritarian "banking" of information. Learners, guided by teachers, jointly investigate and analyse themes of significance to their lives (see Hickling-Hudson, 1988). The learning and knowledge created through this "Pedagogy of the Oppressed" (Freire, 1972) is political in the sense that it identifies and challenges unjust and oppressive structures and patterns that characterize class-stratified societies.

The Brazilian dramatist, Augusto Boal, utilized drama as a vehicle for Freire's dialogical and political approach. He developed a technique of 'Theatre of the Oppressed' (Boal, 1993) in which actors, during the course of the play, invited audiences to engage directly with them in representing or finding solutions to the problems being acted out on stage. This, in turn, influenced the technique of process-drama now utilized by many drama educators.

The dialogical pedagogy, application of knowledge, and socio-political consciousness-raising of these approaches are evident in the work of the AYF teachers, who, in using them, also develop the "multiple intelligences" (see Gardner, 2000) and the "literacies" of their students. The AYF teaching team helps the young people articulate their own experiences and turn these into creative works. In the process, the youths encounter many aspects of education that they have missed.

In spite of the non-formal setting of the AYF, there is a carefully structured curriculum, taught by the AYF leader and at least two additional tutors. Working through the curriculum takes approximately nine months. However, some members stay on indefinitely as AYF associates, who help when needed as facilitators or assistants in artistic productions. The AYF curriculum includes these phases:

1. *Introductory and closing activities*: The young people, in small groups, talk about the best and worst things that have happened in their lives, and share their vision for themselves and their future. This enhances a sense of sharing and trust. The life skills that need to be acquired if they are to achieve their vision become the basis for workshops. Each session ends with a relaxed winding down of activity and further dialogical reflection on what was learned.
2. *Developmental activities*: The tutors select topics that relate to the particular problem that has come out of the initial group discussion. In workshops, topics such as the following are explored in some depth: a) interpersonal communication; b) coping with conflict; c) uses and abuses of power; d) gender relations, parenting, and family life; e) healthy lifestyles; f) taking a stand on social issues; and g) the world of work.
3. *Artistic activities*: Song writing, theatre productions, creating music videos and photo-novellas, and working on film sets are some of the artistic activities that emerge from the process.

Workshop guest speakers raise topics such as sexuality, family life, group relations, psychology, and the development of Jamaica and its social structure and tensions. Guest speakers may include prominent people such as newspaper editors and university lecturers, or leaders from the community who share the challenges faced by the young people and have learned to overcome

these challenges, sometimes bringing about change that ameliorates these problems. The speakers relate to the group in an entertaining way, through anecdotes that illustrate social issues and invite discussion. These structured sessions exploring social issues help the youth to develop a wider knowledge framework.

AYF's leader expresses the teaching/learning significance of the process in this way:

The discussions with the participants give us the basis for teaching and working with them. We now know who they are, what they are thinking, what is important to them. Everything flows from that. Our building blocks are who they are and what they already know. Everything they create comes out of this—they write a poem, create a dance, or a song, or do a small skit. Then we can further develop the storyline from that material. It can even become a musical stage show that develops as we rehearse it. The group talks about the story expressed in the skit, poem or song they created. Who is the hero? The protagonist and antagonist? What are some of the ways in which it could end? We, the facilitators, become directors who will make it work as a work of art. We might say: "That piece doesn't work there, let's try it somewhere else." (2012 interview with Graham)

An important feature of the pedagogical process is the development of the humanist literacies of the young AYF members. They learn to interact with each other in a positive way instead of in an aggressive way. Observing that many of the youth started the AYF program full of aggression, Graham felt that this stemmed from a subliminal anger at how the society marginalizes them and their communities. Inequality of income, education, and social standing combine to intensify a sense of grievance. The facilitators aim to get the youth to work out alternatives to aggression. "We ask them to remind themselves constantly that a 'diss'[9] is not a crime! It doesn't have to lead to a fight! They have this cosmic inferiority complex . . . Anger is constantly breaking out—everything is a cuss-cuss!" (2004 interview with Graham). The work of developing self-knowledge and self-understanding has the goal, of "having access to your own emotions, knowing yourself" (2012 interview with Graham).

When the group staged a musical theatre production titled "Family," it emerged from workshop sessions in which they explored the intimate side of what happens at home. This opened social sores, such as abuse and lack of love and care. Some of the group members had, as children, been given away by their mothers (absent fathers being the norm[10]) to someone else to raise them because their mothers couldn't handle them or couldn't afford them. This left the youth with deep trauma. "If you are not worthy of love from your mother, who's going to love you? This reinforces the feeling of the lack of regard, lack of respect from the society" (2004 interview with Graham). The teaching team sometimes had to get the Family Court to intervene in cases where young women in the group had been sexually abused by males in their family or community. With these kinds of difficult family circumstances, getting the young people to think about who they are, to achieve positive knowledge of themselves, "is a constant struggle, a lot of what we do" (2004 interview with Graham). Part of this process is education to improve gender relations. It is notable that the ratio of young men to young women in the AYF is usually 60/40 or more. Graham thinks that young men are especially eager to become AYF members for many reasons. It appears that the practical nature of the program attracts them, that they are less willing

than young women to go into other more traditional types of educational programs, and that they tend to be bolder than many young women when it comes to experimenting with unfamiliar forms of creative expression (2012 interview with Graham). Given the crisis of disproportionate male underachievement in education in Jamaica,[11] it is important to explore why learning through the AYF is so attractive to young males.

The technical literacies developed in AYF workshops and performances are the basis of knowledge that will help the young participants to envisage and pursue careers. For example, through the *All in Pictures* photo-novella or comic-book project, AYF members created a series of illustrated booklets in comic-book style about issues that deeply concerned them, including HIV awareness, crime and violence, unemployment, and drug and child abuse. To prepare the young people, the teaching team taught them skills of constructing and writing stories—learning about plot, protagonist, antagonist, problem, resolution, and conclusion. The groups enacted dramatic improvisations on topics they selected; these became the basis of the booklets. Then they designed costumes and sets, acted out and photographed each scene for the booklets, selected the most suitable photos out of the hundreds they had taken, up-linked the photos into a computer graphics program, wrote “conversation bubbles” in Jamaican Creole and narration in Standard English, edited the booklets for final production, published and marketed them. Thus, the production of the photo-novella series involved an intense teaching/learning process that was both theoretical and practical. It developed the group’s understandings of socio-political issues, creative writing, and drama, as well as skills in digital photography, computers, editing and publishing printed material, and marketing.

The work of Area Youth members in creating musical theatre, film, and text develops not only their technical/artistic skills, but also their overall educational levels and the epistemic literacies relating particularly to Jamaica’s cultural industries. Having to learn a script is enormous motivation for systematic reading, and this leads to reading improvement. Those who are involved in writing scripts for the group improve even more. The young people might find themselves acting, casting, preparing costumes, assisting the director or the producer, preparing the location, doing makeup, graphics, sound, camera operations, or electrical work. These activities prepare Area Youth members to work in the entertainment industry, which is booming. As AYF’s leader observes, “they are learning rare skills which are in demand” (Graham, 2007).

Another way the AYF teaching team helps to develop the epistemic literacies of the young people is by organising help with formal schooling for any group members who asks. Tutors work with those who ask for help with reading and mathematics. With low levels of functional literacy, most of the youth do not have the skills to pass exams in the Jamaican educational system. AYF’s leader explained that they are good at oral expression in Jamaican Creole, but find it difficult or impossible to write exam answers in standard English (2012 interview with Graham). Therefore, extra help is essential for them. Although the overall pass rates in school-leaving exams are low, some group members have attended the Edna Manley College for the Visual and Performing Arts, completing a three-year teaching diploma in drama-in-education, and some have graduated from universities in Jamaica and abroad. Additionally, the Area Youth project gives some participants opportunities to develop leadership skills by encouraging alumni to work alongside project teachers as peer facilitators in workshops and community development projects.

It is also important to note how the AYF teaching team helps to develop the young people's public literacies, in the sense of their competence in contributing to the public sphere and deploying public structures for social good. This is vividly evident in the healing of political divisions between AYF members, and their use of drama, music, and art for social advancement in their local communities. An example of how AYF has contributed to peace-building in troubled communities was its organisation of *Peace Boat*, an unprecedented community sports and cultural celebration that brought hostile communities together after violent local elections in 2003 (see Graham, 2007). This is work with a socio-political impact. The AYF is reaching out to communities and helping to heal political divisions. The group decides to go to communities where they could have the most impact, or they simply go to communities that have invited them. They offer workshops using the group methods they have learned—talking about problems in the community and developing skits and songs. AYF members initiated collective mural creations in some of these communities, inviting residents to consider how they would like their community to be visually portrayed. The workshops start with doodles and informal sketches of participants' ideas. A visual artist later compiles these into a picture suitable for a mural, and transfers the drawing to the mural on a large, public wall. Community members then paint the mural, filling in the colours.

The Mountain View community in Kingston presents a striking example of the positive impact of peace work by AYF members collaborating with other state and civil society organizations. Former gang leaders of fighting factions came together and created a united Community Council. They all received mediation training and still collaborate to defuse tensions whenever there is a flare up. A location under the control of one area leader has been renamed the "Eastern Peace Centre" and is the site of a basic school, homework centre, youth club, football team, and recording studio.[12] The young man who operates the centre was the protégé of the area leader and himself a gang member. He began to change course by supporting AYF's efforts and then becoming an AYF member. He is now a UNICEF youth Xchanger and has travelled for UNICEF to Ethiopia, the UK, and the USA. He has received scholarships to international community leadership training programmes, and his goal is to study one day for a PhD in Anthropology (2012 interview with Graham).

Conclusion: The Socio-Educational Significance of the Area Youth Project

In this article I discussed how the Area Youth Foundation's motto, "Youth Empowerment Through the Arts," is played out in workshops and creative productions that are simultaneously learner-driven and teacher-guided. These productions and workshops have powerful impact, developing the humanist, epistemic, technical, and public literacies of the participants in the sense of their improved knowledge and competencies in a wide range of discourses and skills.

The poignant stories narrated by my interviewees illustrate their growing social understanding, increased conflict-resolution skills and technical competencies, and efforts to improve their communities—to summarise, their experience of absorbing the "literacies" embedded in the AYF program. The AYF has made a difference in Jamaican society by addressing a gap in the education system. It has worked successfully with several thousand young adults whose socio-educational needs were not being met, and it has served to carve out a respected and admired

social niche for participating young people. This contrasts with the marginalisation these youth suffered while growing up in divided and troubled inner-city communities. The theme “transforming lives” (Yard Edge Blog, 2008) relates aptly to the lives of most AYF members. For young adults who have been disadvantaged by substandard schooling, the powerful learning experiences provided by the AYF help them to have a chance of becoming successful and effective, not only in their careers and social relationships, but also in their ability to challenge and change entrenched public injustices, as suggested by their success in reducing antagonism and violence among different community groups.

AYF educational experiences are not intended to substitute for schooling. The project director pointed out that the work of AYF should be a complement to formal education, not a “remedial teacher” (2004 interview with Graham). However, if the approach were to be used as a component of formal education, it could help change Jamaica’s dysfunctional system. The unique arts-based approach of the AYF could be applied to changing the narrow confines and abstractness of traditional curricula in schools and adult education programs. As Mark Figueroa (2010) observes: “In the Caribbean, our students are required to be far too passive; they are trained to be risk averse and are forced to engage in endless rote learning in a school system that is oriented more towards passing exams than learning and developing life skills. Such characteristics are in conflict with male gender socialisation and an education reform that would benefit boys as well as girls.”

The cultural relevance and economic effects of creative and applied learning are of vital importance in an environment of high unemployment. Television programs and movies in Jamaica are overwhelmingly imported, especially from the USA. These and other homogenised products of globalisation are increasingly displacing local media content (see Gordon, 2009). The AYF’s success in training young people to create, develop, and implement artistic media and theatre products drawing on local roots is of cultural importance in this regard. The development of interpersonal skills and community interaction through AYF programs is particularly important in locations where community cohesion has been broken down. This interpersonal approach would almost certainly improve formal school curricula. Building on student knowledge would be a contrast to the neo-colonial tradition of valuing a single type of academic knowledge as supreme. The lesson is for education to focus far more than it has in the past on giving learners opportunities to develop the self-knowledge and interpersonal intelligence embodied in humanist literacy, to reflect on their life-worlds, and to connect with their communities.

Voluntary associations such as the AYF are helping Jamaica to achieve its goals of providing educational services to adults who have been poorly served by the formal education system. Pointing out that some 70% of the Jamaican labour pool has no certification, Jamaica’s Minister of Education, Hon. Ronald Thwaites, estimated that some 150,000 to 200,000 adults could benefit from new measures that the government aimed to put in place to expand access to adult learning--measures that included increased adult basic education through e-learning and a new high school equivalency program (Robinson, 2012). With such an urgent need to expand adult education, the Ministry of Education should support and encourage voluntary programs such as the AYF. Such a step would eliminate the precarious process of winning competitive grants for discrete projects that the AYF depends on to survive. A move by the government to recognise

and support the teaching of multiple “literacies” would also address the challenge faced by the AYF of depending on the goodwill of highly skilled volunteers. It could be of social and educational value for the Jamaican government to assist the continuation—and expansion—of this and other non-formal learning institutions that have demonstrated social worth and educational excellence over a sustained period.

Notes:

- [1]. As a Caribbean educator, I had the powerful experience of working with Paulo Freire for two weeks as one of the facilitators in a teacher education workshop in 1980 in Grenada (see Hickling-Hudson, 1988). This became a watershed in my educational development (see Evans, 2009, pp. 219-220). Another watershed was my deeper exploration of the interaction between literacies, pedagogies, and social stratification and how this relates to adult education (Hickling-Hudson, 1995, 2013). Since 1987, while continuing my work in teacher education in Australia, I frequently revisit the Caribbean to keep in touch with educational developments there (see Hickling-Hudson, 2004, 2006).
- [2]. The privileged apex of the school system in Jamaica and most Commonwealth Caribbean countries consists of private, fee-paying preparatory schools (Kindergarten to Grade 6), and independent fee-paying high schools which are “grant-aided” by the government (Grades 7 to 13). The majority of primary and secondary schools, entirely government-funded, are at lower levels of the educational hierarchy in terms of resources, teacher qualifications, and students’ socio-economic background, social status, and academic performance (see Evans, 2001, pp. 1-15, for an overview of schools and schooling in Jamaica). Jamaica’s high schools, taken as a whole, fail to provide adequate education for the majority of students. Examination results in the school-leaving Caribbean Secondary Examination Certificate (CSEC) were particularly low in 2012. In the core subjects, 46.2% passed English and only 31.7% passed Mathematics (see *Jamaica Gleaner* Editorial, August 2012). In the cohort of 50,000 students enrolled in Grade 11 in 2012, some 20,000 did not sit the CSEC exams. Of those entered, only about 17% passed five subjects including English and Mathematics (Henry, 2012).
- [3]. Dr. Patric Rutherford (2010) refers to a study revealing that 15.5% of the students who attend schools in the inner-city communities of Kingston suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder resulting from their experience of violence and abuse. Dr. Yvonne Bailey-Davidson (2011) points out: “The most recent data from the National Council on Drug Abuse show that 23% of (Jamaican) teenagers aged 13-15 years are having suicidal ideation and 22% have attempted suicide. Depression, anxiety, substance abuse, sexual abuse and domestic violence can predispose teenagers to have suicidal thoughts.”
- [4]. “AYF’s unique methodology harnesses the artistic disciplines of theatre and drama, music and dance as educational, social, cultural development tools to stimulate personal development and behaviour change, impart useful skills which enhance opportunities for employment and advance the imaginative talents of poor and excluded people in the creation of democratic and inclusive societies. It applies elements of the theories and practicum of Harvard’s Howard Gardner, U. Chicago’s Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, anthropologist Oscar Lewis, Paulo Freire and Augusto Boal of Brazil, Britain’s Dorothy Heathcote, Jamaica’s Dennis Scott and Honor Ford-Smith and those developed in over twenty years of collaboration of AYF’s founders Sheila Graham, Winston Bell and Owen Ellis” (written

- correspondence from Sheila Lowe Graham, 2012). See also <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Area-Youth-Foundation/114840015241111>
- [5]. HEART Trust/NTA is the acronym for the Human Employment and Resource Training Trust and National Training Agency. A member of the International Labour Organization, it organizes vocational and technical training and certification, and sets standards for the TVET system in Jamaica (see <http://www.worldskillsjamaica.org/index.php/item/1-heart-nta>).
- [6]. Information about the audiences is based on written information supplied in 2013 by Sheila Lowe Graham. As well as directing local performances, she was in charge of taking the young people abroad to respond to overseas invitations to perform, and provided the following information about the European audiences: “In London, ‘Link Up’ was staged in Brent, one of the boroughs with the highest percentage of immigrants from the Caribbean, Africa and Asia. The audiences were a mixture of white English people and ‘new English’ descendants of the immigrant population. The group also performed at Theatre Royal, Stratford. In Huddersfield, West Yorkshire, the group performed at the prestigious Lawrence Batley Theatre. Word of mouth from the London audiences sold out the two performances there. In Italy, excerpts from ‘Link Up’ were performed at the annual international Reggae Festival, Rototom Sunsplash, to audiences of reggae-loving Europeans. This was followed by performances at a Festival Village in Rome and then at Limone sul Garda, a tourist resort town in the Italian Alps. On another visit to the UK, AYF members performed in several disadvantaged urban communities in a London festival called Summer in the City, and in Liverpool in an international youth festival called Global Euphoria, which was part of the cultural programme for the Commonwealth Games—the opening of which was attended by Her Majesty the Queen.”
- [7]. The AYF director estimates that some 3,000 young Jamaicans have been learners in Area Youth Foundation workshops. However, records are not specific as to which participants were engaged long term or short term. Many thousands more have participated in outreach activities that take place in the communities (e.g., the Peace Boat).
- [8]. AYF’s director is variously addressed as Sheila, Miss, Miss G, Auntie, and Mummy (the latter two are normal usage in popular Jamaican culture). Very few call her “Mrs. Graham.”
- [9]. Jamaican vernacular that means “disrespect.”
- [10]. According to the 2011 census, 80% of children in Jamaica are born out of wedlock, and many of these do not have their father’s name on their birth certificates. Many relationships take the form of multiple sequential partnerships over the prime child-bearing and child-rearing years, with arguably adverse effects to family stability (see Henry, 2013).
- [11]. Of Jamaicans aged 15–24, 26.2% males and 7.9% females are illiterate (UNFPA, 2011). Females outperform males in examinations to enter high school, in school leaving exams, and at university (see Figueroa, 2004). Observations made by Barry Chevannes (1999) concerning the roots of problems in male identity in Jamaica remain relevant.
- [12]. This news extract suggests the benefits gained from the work to heal divisions and promote peace:
- Gunshots every night, burned-down businesses and corpses up to a half-dozen a day used to define the neighborhood of Mountain View on the eastern hillsides of Kingston, Jamaica’s capital. But not anymore. Now, the nights are filled with barefoot soccer matches under streetlights or block parties that bring together former rivals from local gangs. No one has been murdered in Mountain View for three years. “The dark cloud is moving away,” said Keith

Nugent, 76, a tailor in the neighborhood who counsels former criminals. “Young people here are beginning to gravitate to a sense of life, and function.” (*Urban News Hour*, 2013, retrieved from <http://urbannewshour.com/news/the-murder-rate-is-down-40-in-jamaica/>)

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Promoting Change within the Constraints of Conflict: Case Study of Sadaka Reut in Israel

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This article explores the approach to transformative education utilized by Sadaka Reut, a binational civil society organization in Israel that works with Jewish and Palestinian youth. I examine three central tools Sadaka Reut uses to achieve its goal of educating youth for social change: using personal experiences as the basis for discussion; emphasizing personal-structural links; and implementing uninational activities within a binational framework. I argue that though the organization's approach holds potential for appealing to a broad audience and for fostering transformation amongst participants, the strength of dominant discourses in Israeli society places significant constraints on Sadaka Reut's work and limits possibilities for widespread success.

The Work of Sadaka Reut

On a January evening in 2011, I joined Sadaka Reut's Bat Yam[2] group for its weekly meeting and a discussion of self-portraits taken by the group's members—Jewish young women in the 9th through 11th grades from lower-middle class families of Moroccan descent. Inana,[3] one of the group members, described two pictures taken outside her military training school, explaining that they depicted students at rest following a mandatory end-of-the-day formation. Michal, the group's facilitator, a 23-year-old Jewish woman, asked Inana and the rest of the group about these photographs: "What does this picture tell us about you and about your school environment? What is the ratio of boys and girls in the school? Why do you think are there fewer girls than boys studying at a military school?"[4]

Over the next hour, the group discussed this and related issues. From the question about the boy-girl ratio emerged several comments about contexts characterized by significant gender imbalance, and who is advantaged and disadvantaged by such situations. When Sivan, another participant, mentioned that women face a difficult choice about careers in Israel's military, saying, "You can't be a mom" in that context, Michal suggested, "[These choices] are structurally constrained. In other words, personal desires are influenced by external factors, and not only internal ones: what we decide, or what we want, is structured by our society and our environment." Michal emphasized the personal-structural connection repeatedly throughout the discussion, asking how power relations in Israeli society influence personal choices. As the session drew to a close, another participant, Gavrielle, said, "You can't generalize. Society defines who is a man or a woman—but it doesn't mean that he or she will be exactly the way society says they should be." Michal responded. "That's exactly how I think we should summarize today's discussion—thinking about the roles that society sets for us, and yet, how each of us as individuals fit (or don't fit) into those roles."

I share this vignette as a starting point to highlight the work of the Israeli civil society organization, Sadaka Reut. The vignette embodies Sadaka Reut's programmatic approach, implemented with the overarching goals of helping youth develop critical awareness of structural issues in Israeli society and fostering engagement in activities aimed at challenging policies that create advantages for some groups while systemically discriminating against others. Sadaka Reut's approach has allowed it to survive within an environment characterized by conflict-laden relations between Jews and Palestinians,[5] and unequal opportunities for Israeli minorities. Moreover, this approach has enabled Sadaka Reut to permeate the formal education system while maintaining a critical ideology challenging messages disseminated in Israeli schools. Yet, I argue that even as it has adopted approaches designed to mitigate constraining factors and facilitated significant change among its participants, dominant societal discourses limit Sadaka Reut's potential for contributing broadly to social change in Israel and thus its success as an educational initiative.

Background and Context

Inter-group conflicts have characterized Israel since its founding in 1948. Prime among these conflicts is antagonism between Jewish and Palestinian citizens, related to but distinct from Israel's conflict with Palestinians in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip. While the latter conflict is primarily over territorial sovereignty, the Jewish-Palestinian conflict *within* Israel is a reflection of the status of Palestinian citizens as a "trapped minority" (Rabinowitz, 2001) and as a group subject to overt and implicit discrimination at all levels and in multiple sectors (Al-Haj, 1995; Human Rights Watch, 2001).

Israel's founding documents serve as a basis for the tensions between Jewish and Palestinian citizens. The State is defined as both Jewish and democratic, according to its Declaration of Independence (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1948), a dual definition raising fundamental questions about the nature of Israel's democracy and the potential for Jewish and Palestinian citizens to enjoy equality within the polity. Palestinians exist "in a circle peripheral to the core" of Israeli society (Shafir & Peled, 1998, p. 254), sharing the individual rights of liberal citizenship without the benefits of citizenship as an ethno-national collective (Ghanem, 2000). Moreover, the dominant ethno-national discourse in Israel—disseminated in the media, in the education system, and via other societal institutions—privileges beliefs that emphasize Jewish victimization and promote Israel's historical and contemporary claim to land (Bar-Tal, Halperin, & Oren, 2011). Simultaneously, dominant discourse also de-legitimizes the Palestinian historical narrative, for example by preventing discussion or instruction about events important to the Palestinian nation within Jewish and Palestinian schools (Abu-Saad, 2008; Golan-Agnon, 2006).[6]

As a result of both explicit and implicit discrimination, tensions simmer constantly under the surface of Jewish-Palestinian relations. Since Israel's establishment, Palestinian citizens have reacted to these tensions in different ways, including, since the 1970s, coordinated protests against the government. While these protests declined in the 1990s, disappointment and frustration grew at the end of the decade after promises of increased support to Palestinian localities failed to materialize (Yiftachel, 1999). In September 2000, frustrations among

Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip led to an uprising that became known as the Al-Aqsa Intifada. Within the State of Israel, antagonism between Palestinian and Jewish citizens exploded soon after the outbreak of the Al-Aqsa Intifada, when 12 Palestinian citizens and 1 Jew were killed following protests held in solidarity with Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The October 2000 events were a warning signal to Jewish citizens about the degree of alienation felt by their Palestinian counterparts (Or, 2004). Yet, more than a decade later, the situation in Israel has not improved—indeed, there are indications that Israeli society has become more polarized. For example, recent protests decrying relationships between Jewish and Palestinian citizens indicate the degree to which Jewish Israelis view their Palestinian counterparts with suspicion (Hadad, 2011; Levinson, 2011). Furthermore, numerous instances of anti-Palestinian vandalism, graffiti, and physical violence instigated by Jews (e.g., Boker, 2013; Kubovich, 2013; Lidman, 2013) have further damaged inter-group relationships. Within this context of segregation and animosity, any initiative bringing Jewish and Palestinian citizens together or emphasizing education for Jewish-Palestinian partnership is viewed as “political,” regardless of its objectives (e.g., Bar-Tal, 2011).

Although the predominant conflict within Israeli society is between Jews and Palestinians, other minority groups suffer from systemic discrimination, as well. Within the Jewish community, the disadvantaging of the Mizrahi[7] community in relation to Ashkenazi[8] Jews has been well documented (Shohat, 1999), as has the discrimination faced by Ethiopian immigrants (Ben-Eliezer, 2004). In recent years Israel has seen an influx of non-Jewish immigrants and asylum seekers from parts of Africa and Asia; these groups, too, suffer from institutional discrimination and widespread racism in Israeli society (Bartram, 2011; Willen, 2010).

Conceptual Issues and Related Research

Against this background of tension and conflict, inter-group encounter programs are one approach to improving relationships between groups in Israeli society. Such programs, focusing primarily on the Jewish-Palestinian rift, have been implemented in Israel since the 1950s, with the overarching objectives of promoting mutual respect and awareness of multiple narratives (Abu-Nimer, 1999).

Studies of inter-group encounter programs in conflict contexts—most but not all of which focus on Israel-Palestine—fall into two primary categories. First, a number of studies examine cognitive and affective change among participants. For example, using questionnaires completed prior to and following participation in an encounter program, Maoz (2003) examined changes in attitude toward Palestinians among Jews with different political affiliations. Research using a similar approach has also examined: gender differences in the outcomes of encounter program participation (Yablon, 2009); ethnic differences among Georgian and Abkhaz youth in encounter program effects (Ohanyan & Lewis, 2005); and long-term change in empathy toward the “other” among Tamil and Sinhalese Sri Lankan youth (Malhotra & Liyanage, 2005).

A second line of scholarship focuses on the encounter process itself. For instance, several studies examine the nature of interaction between participants in a Jewish-Palestinian encounter program

and the way that participants' language use in the encounter is reflective of their views related to the conflict (e.g., Steinberg & Bar-On, 2002; Maoz et al., 2002; Bekerman, 2009). Other research has examined perceptions of dialogue facilitators regarding the encounter process (Bekerman, Maoz, & Sheftel, 2006; Maoz, Bekerman, & Sheftel, 2007).

Taken as a whole, scholarship points to different perspectives regarding whether, how, and under what conditions encounter programs are successful in promoting change (Bar-Tal, 2004; Maoz, 2011; Salomon, 2006, 2009). Yet, with few exceptions, literature on encounters between conflict groups measures change among individual participants using a model that treats the encounter itself as a black box, mostly ignoring how programmatic choices—for example, whether greater emphasis is placed on structured activities or informal opportunities for cross-national conversation—might influence individual-level outcomes.

Moreover, much of the research in this field fails to take into account the broader socio-political context in which encounters are implemented and how this environment shapes possible outcomes, both at the individual level and with respect to transformation on a larger, societal scale. Bekerman and Zembylas (2012), however, argue that attempts to “build peace” within a nation-state must take into account the nation-state's influence in what happens in these endeavors.[9] In contrast, scholarship providing guidance on *how* to educate for social change (e.g., Anyon, 2009), including in contexts characterized by long-standing inter-group conflict (Jansen, 2009), says little about the outcomes of the approaches suggested. Definitions of success, in other words, do not take context into account.

I use Sadaka Reut's work as a case study to address these gaps in the literature and to raise a central question about what it means to educate for social change in the Israeli context. Specifically, I ask whether and how approaches such as those utilized by Sadaka Reut can facilitate transformation among individual participants. I then contextualize these approaches within Israel's socio-political environment, examining how the intersection between organization and environment limits the potential for larger-scale change.

Sadaka Reut: Goals, Structure, Staff, and Programs

Established in 1983, Sadaka Reut is one of Israel's veteran organizations bringing together Jewish and Palestinian youth. The organization is guided by an overarching mission of educating and empowering “Jewish and Palestinian Israeli youth and university students to pursue social and political change through binational partnership” (http://en.reutsadaka.org/?page_id=627, accessed July 5, 2013). Two principles lie at the heart of Sadaka Reut's work: educating youth for social engagement, out of the belief that “a single person has the ability to impact change in important issues” (Sadaka Reut's facilitation manual, 2000, p. 5); and providing a model of joint Jewish-Palestinian partnership, based on the assumption that “only real and honest partnership between the two nations can bring about significant social change for a different future” (Sadaka Reut's *Ma'arachim* facilitation manual, 2005, p. 1). Above all, Sadaka Reut emphasizes partnership as a tool for confronting and overcoming systemic inequalities in Israeli society.

Sadaka Reut implements a range of programs targeting individuals from late junior high through adulthood. At Sadaka Reut's core is its original, flagship program, *Building a Culture of Peace*

(BCP)—the program referenced in the opening vignette. BCP is made up of local groups from around the country (usually including 10-20 participants each) that meet weekly over the course of at least one, but often two or even three academic years. In its first year, each BCP group is uninational (made up of Jews *or* Palestinians), but joins other BCP groups monthly for binational (joint Jewish-Palestinian) activities and periodically for weekend seminars. BCP groups in their 2nd or 3rd year often expand to become regionally based, binational groups. Participants also take part in an annual 3-day summer camp focused on engaging in activism around a specific political issue.

BCP's overarching mission of bringing Jewish and Palestinian youth together in a way that encourages constructive partnership, critical awareness, and skill-building has remained the same throughout Sadaka Reut's history. However, the program's approach has shifted over time. For instance, in the years following the outbreak of the Al-Aqsa Intifada, Sadaka Reut staff came to the conclusion that, as the Palestinian co-director told me, "the real work of consciousness raising happens in uninational meetings." In comparison, she explained, binational meetings, if not preceded by extensive uninational work, almost always reinforce dominant power dynamics in Israeli society. This is why BCP groups are initially formed uninationally, rather than, as was the case for many years, in binational format. In addition, BCP's original emphasis on fostering inter-personal ties between Jews and Palestinians has been replaced by an emphasis on addressing power dynamics between groups in Israeli society and empowering participants with respect to both their personal and collective identity claims. Finally, in the last ten years, Sadaka Reut has placed a greater priority on recruiting BCP participants from marginalized population groups within the Jewish population, such as Ethiopians and Mizrahi youth.

BCP follows a flexible curriculum in which each group, over the course of the year, develops an action agenda based on an issue they deem important to their community (e.g., housing demolitions, inter-group relations, social services). Regardless of the focus, a similar overarching structure characterizes each group. For example, the year begins with activities aimed at establishing relationships among group members before shifting into discussions related to personal and collective identity, democratic principles and equal rights, and the Jewish-Palestinian conflict.[10] These discussions, as I explain below, focus on the individual experiences of participants and are molded to fit the overarching topic of each group's focus. All facilitators are provided with a curricular manual that describes the organization's mission, vision, and pedagogical rationale, in addition to providing information on the general structure BCP groups should adhere to throughout the year and examples of different activities that facilitators can draw upon in their work.

Each year the BCP program reaches 200-300 youth by opening approximately 20 groups (10 Jewish and 10 Palestinian)—over 5,000 youth have participated since Sadaka Reut was established in 1983. Participants are recruited through another Sadaka Reut program called *Ma'arachim* (literally, "lesson plans"), which brings facilitators into both Jewish and Palestinian classrooms to implement workshops about issues ranging from racism to gender to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict.[11] *Ma'arachim* coordinators try to market the program to schools in the areas where BCP groups meet; however, many workshops are implemented at the invitation of individual teachers or principals who wish to take advantage of Sadaka Reut's expertise in and interactive approach to addressing social issues. The specific content of *Ma'arachim* workshops

is decided upon jointly by Sadaka Reut staff and teachers, with input from students regarding which social issues are most relevant to their lives. These workshops range from single, two-hour sessions to weekly meetings that take place over the course of several weeks. My discussion in this paper focuses primarily on BCP and *Ma'arachim*.

Each of Sadaka Reut's programs is jointly administered by Palestinian and Jewish co-coordinators, just as a Jew and a Palestinian co-direct the organization overall. Coordinators oversee Sadaka Reut facilitators; each uninational BCP group is led by a facilitator with the same ethno-national background as the group's participants, and *Ma'arachim* facilitators are likewise of the same ethno-national background as students in the classrooms where they implement workshops. When BCP groups meet binationally, they are always led by a pair of co-facilitators, one Jewish and one Palestinian. These facilitators, the immediate contact for BCP and *Ma'arachim* participants, are university students or young professionals in their early- to mid-20s, many of whom are former BCP participants.

Methodology

The analysis in this article is based upon data collected between August 2010 and April 2011. During this period, I conducted approximately 100 hours of observation of Sadaka Reut activities, including staff trainings and meetings, weekly meetings of one Jewish BCP group,[12] monthly regional activities, and one weekend retreat bringing together all Jewish and Palestinian BCP participants. I also conducted interviews with 20 former and current Sadaka Reut staff and board members, and collected and analyzed educational materials (including facilitation manuals and staff training guides) developed and used over the past three decades.

My analysis also draws upon life history interviews conducted with 43 Sadaka Reut alumni—individuals who participated in BCP and/or in *Community in Action*, Sadaka Reut's one-year intensive leadership program for high school graduates, in the years between 1983 and 2009. I utilized a mix of quota and snowball sampling to recruit participants, interviewing approximately equal numbers of Jews/Palestinians and males/females, as well as approximately equal numbers of participants from the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s. Interviews began with a request for participants to "Tell me about your life," with additional questions emerging naturally during the conversation. Topics addressed in most interviews included: experiences as participants in the organization's programs, family background, beliefs and activities related to social change, education, and professional experiences. I conducted additional interviews with several participants and one focus group interview with Sadaka Reut staff members during a follow-up visit to Israel in April-May 2012.

Achieving the Vision: Programmatic Approaches

In implementing the BCP and *Ma'arachim* programs, Sadaka Reut emphasizes a number of approaches that guide facilitators in their engagement with youth, as well as reinforce the organization's core principles of educating youth for social awareness and engagement and embodying a model of joint Jewish-Palestinian partnership. These approaches are also used to try to make Sadaka Reut's work more palatable with stakeholders in Israel's current socio-political environment. They include: using participants' experiences as the starting point for discussion;

fostering awareness of the connection between personal choices and structural constraints; and engaging in uninational activity within a framework emphasizing binational partnership.

Working from the Personal Outwards

Sadaka Reut places a priority on utilizing participants' interests and experiences as the core material upon which discussions are based. For instance, weekly BCP meetings often begin with the facilitator framing the discussion generally around some topic and then eliciting commentary about participants' experiences related to this topic, or using comments made at the start of a session to generate broader discussion. This approach can be seen in the opening vignette, with Inana's comments on her photographs and school experiences leading into a discussion about the military and structural opportunities in Israeli society.

The approach is also reflected in a meeting I observed of this same group earlier in the 2010-2011 academic year, during which Michal, the group facilitator, had participants read two short stories on the topic of group identity, and then asked them how these stories related to issues in their own lives. One participant, Danya, commented that the inter-group relations in the stories reminded her of feeling uncomfortable while walking around a nearby park, because of the groups of *arsim*[13] congregating there at night. Michal pushed Danya and other group members to explain how they defined *arsim* and what made them a group. As the evening continued, the discussion remained focused on specific groups with which the BCP participants interacted. Yet, over ensuing months, conversations about group identity and stereotypes expanded beyond Danya and other group members' direct experiences toward more abstract issues, such as the symbolic importance of identity in conflict. Eventually, this group also discussed the importance of thinking about these issues as a way of understanding and changing social realities—an important discussion in the weeks preceding Sadaka Reut's summer camp, an annual event during which BCP participants collectively engage in confronting social justice issues.

Sadaka Reut's approach of starting with participants' experiences holds true for *Ma'arachim* as well as BCP. As a Jewish *Ma'arachim* coordinator explained to me, “[Our fundamental principle] is to address, first of all, what the students see in their own reality: what sorts of groups exist, what kinds of relationships exist between those groups.” She continued, explaining why this approach is so important to Sadaka Reut's work:

We start from the assumption that in order to try to create change in others one needs to understand oneself, what is important to oneself, to what one connects—you need to help individuals create a connection between themselves and their community. You can't come in and impose something upon them. So [the *Ma'arachim* program] is very focused on providing a space for [youth], for their worldviews, and also for their racism . . . and that, in many ways, is our power, both pedagogically and ideologically. That is, in order for someone to understand the world in a critical manner, and understand the other, and identify with the other, one needs to understand one's place, one needs to learn and act within the reality in which one lives.

As the quote above suggests, Sadaka Reut's emphasis on utilizing participants' experiences as the basis for discussions is ideologically rooted. As an organization committed to empowering

youth to pursue societal change, it uses participants' personal experiences as a starting point for creating connections to systemic issues. This emphasis also means that an individual's first experience with the organization—often via a *Ma'arachim* workshop implemented in his/her classroom—is one that connects Sadaka Reut to him/her personally. In theory at least, this provides Sadaka Reut with a broader basis for recruiting participants into BCP.

Emphasizing the Personal-Structural Link

Sadaka Reut's emphasis on using personal experiences as the basis for discussions is related to its focus on linking those experiences to systemic issues within Israeli society. In the opening vignette, this comes across in Michal connecting the scenes in Inana's photographs to gender-based societal constraints. Other Sadaka Reut activities I observed also focused on making participants aware of connections between individual opportunities and broader power dynamics.

For instance, during an activity implemented at a BCP-wide seminar, facilitators distributed post-it notes to participants, each of which had written on it a different "identity" (e.g., an Ashkenazi male, a young Bedouin woman,[14] an older Ethiopian immigrant). The facilitators read out statements about situations that might arise in Israeli society, such as studying at the university or buying a home, and asked participants to physically step forward if they felt this situation might apply to the "character" whose identity they had been given.

In the discussion following this activity, facilitators guided participants' comments about individuals toward examining how these situations might apply to groups as a whole. Raniah, a Palestinian participant who was asked to take on the identity of a Mizrahi male, said that she thought if he tried hard, a Mizrahi male could obtain a university degree. Iris, a Jewish participant, disagreed. Rahim, one of the facilitators, encouraged this discussion, gently reminding group participants about systemic disadvantages faced by Mizrahi citizens that might make obtaining a higher education difficult.

During my conversations with Sadaka Reut staff and former participants, many discussed the importance of being able to critically reflect on structural constraints as a first step in developing strategies to work against them. Comments by Sadaka Reut alumni attest to the organization's success in helping foster this awareness. For example, Efrat, a Jewish woman who participated in Sadaka Reut activities during the late 1980s, explained to me: "Everywhere I am, I read the reality in a critical manner . . . and that's something that I learned from Sadaka Reut. It's like a pair of glasses that became my eyes—they're not glasses any more. I can't take them off. It became the way I see the world."

Likewise, Anna, a Jewish woman who ended her participation in Sadaka Reut activities only a few months before we spoke, told me that she had joined the organization as a social outlet, with no awareness of socio-political issues. Commenting on what she learned in the Sadaka Reut program, Anna said,

I mean, if we're talking about "divide and conquer," then Sadaka took away the divisions. As soon as I saw that there exists [in Israel] another reality aside from the hegemonic reality, I understood that there are so many things that are happening here—I started to see them . . . I started to see what is oppressed and

what is empowered, and how that happens. And I started to examine myself within that.

Anna's comments, like those of Efrat, illustrate her ability to perceive systemic issues in Israeli society, and also link that perception to participation in Sadaka Reut activities. Anna's comments are also a particularly salient example of her ability to understand the link between personal and structural issues.

Uninational Activity within a Binational Framework

Finally, the opening vignette highlights who is missing from the discussion as well as who is present: Palestinian youth participants. The vignette thus illustrates a third principle upon which Sadaka Reut bases much of its work with *Ma'arachim* and BCP participants, discussed in detail above: uninational activity.

The premise underlying uninational activities centers on challenging dominant socialization processes in Israel's segregated schools and other institutions. Specifically, according to Sadaka Reut's facilitation manual, uninational activities are conducted in order to address:

Differences in how Palestinian and Jewish youth are socialized with respect to their identities: the strengthening of a unified collective Jewish identity among Jews, in contrast with the demolition of a Palestinian collective identity through a breaking of the connection between the past and present. This necessitates uninational work in order to strengthen Palestinian collective identity and question the presentation of Jewish identity.

In other words, Sadaka Reut conducts separate activities for Jewish and Palestinian participants so that when they do meet binationally, in regional/national activities or as a continuing binational group, they can interact on a more equal basis, and so that they are capable of understanding the way external power dynamics can disrupt group processes meant to be built on a foundation of equality.

What is the significance of uninational work within an organization explicitly committed to binational partnership? First, it is important to reiterate that binational meetings among Sadaka Reut participants *do* occur in the form of regional and national events, where Jewish and Palestinian BCP participants mingle informally and activities are designed explicitly to mix different groups. More importantly, however, Sadaka Reut models binationalism at an organizational level. In the words of one Palestinian staff member: "We want [our work] to happen in a binational framework . . . because we believe that the real change, the deep change that can happen in this region, is a change in both of the nations together." She continued:

Even if we don't have a dialogue process between the two sides in the conflict, we achieve our objective of being binational. Because our thinking is unified, our work as an organization occurs in partnership, and also our youth, the longer they are here with us, are able to find partners on the other side and to understand what partnership means.

That is, in addition to working to help participants develop a strong ethno-national identity, Sadaka Reut models an *overarching* identity as a binational organization.

Ultimately, the concept of partnership serves as the bedrock of Sadaka Reut's work, and within the organization there is unanimous agreement about the importance of utilizing Jewish-Palestinian partnership as a vehicle for challenging existing inequalities within Israeli society. I observed one meeting that was open to all Sadaka Reut staff, participants, and alumni, where the agenda entailed discussing binationalism as an organizational ideology. During this meeting, it was evident that disagreement exists within Sadaka Reut about what binational partnership should look like.[15] However, every individual expressed a belief in the importance of joint Jewish-Palestinian endeavors, in particular initiatives using partnership as a framework for working to end systemic injustices, rather than focusing on Jewish-Palestinian encounters as an end unto themselves. Haggai, a Jewish Sadaka Reut alumnus, told me, "I think that . . . the most radical thing that one can do in this country is to bring together Jews and Arabs. Because all of the strength, all of the effort of the hegemony and of the authorities is directed at separation." Indeed, he and another 10 of the 43 Sadaka Reut alumni I interviewed suggested that this belief that Jewish-Palestinian partnership is an important vehicle for social change was facilitated by Sadaka-Reut participation, and by the organization's modeling of an alternative to the normal routine of everyday (segregated) Israeli life.

Troubling the Vision: Constraints and Limitations

Shifts over time in Sadaka Reut's programmatic approach have prioritized the three elements discussed above, enabling the organization to better achieve its overarching goal of educating youth for social transformation within the framework of binational partnership. These shifts also form the basis of Sadaka Reut's attempts to broaden its appeal to a wider variety of youth and establish relationships with the formal education system.

Yet, Sadaka Reut's work takes place within a context that legitimates exactly those structural inequalities and the continuing violence that the organization seeks to transform—and this reality serves as a significant constraint. For instance, a number of individuals characterize Sadaka Reut's approach as political, even radical. In and of itself, such a categorization is not necessarily problematic. In fact, among Palestinians I heard praise for the organization's approach and even, from a few alumni, complaints that Sadaka Reut's work is not radical *enough*. However, within Israel's socio-political reality, Sadaka Reut's "radical" attempt to embody and promote Jewish-Palestinian partnership and equality has led some Jews to characterize the organization as promoting a Palestinian agenda.

For example, during my informal conversations with individuals in Israel whose work focuses on implementing Jewish-Palestinian encounters, several expressed surprise that I chose to use Sadaka Reut as a case study for research on binational endeavors. A government employee who works with many organizations bringing together Jews and Palestinians told me explicitly that Sadaka Reut is not so much a binational organization as a Palestinian one. Likewise, a former staff member at another organization implementing joint activities for Jewish and Palestinian youth told me that Sadaka Reut is "branded as a Palestinian movement." In other words, for

them, the organization's approach of challenging systemic inequalities equates to political activism to benefit Palestinians.[16]

Such a perception among a portion of Jews with whom I spoke illustrates the difficulty Sadaka Reut faces in its efforts. The organization *does* work to empower Palestinians and bring the Palestinian narrative into Israeli discourse, out of a conviction that doing so is critical for achieving a just future for *both* Jews and Palestinians. Yet within Israel's current socio-political reality, attempts to promote equality by embodying it are perceived as antithetical to dominant societal narratives, thus resulting in accusations of promoting a Palestinian agenda. Ultimately, it appears that the organization's image diminishes its ability to reach out equally to both Jews and Palestinians—more specifically, to Jews whose views fall into the mainstream.

Such a perception can also hamper Sadaka Reut's relationship with schools in the Jewish sector.[17] Most individuals affiliated with the organization stated that difficulties working within schools are rare, precisely because of the elements of Sadaka Reut's approach that emphasize individuals' experiences rather than placing the Jewish-Palestinian conflict front and center. Indeed, a former Jewish *Ma'arachim* coordinator explained that this approach evolved, in part, "So that schools wouldn't kick us out after the first meeting, on the one hand, and on the other hand, so we could do deep work, so we could bring up the issues we wanted to address." Even so, Sadaka Reut has experienced problems working in Jewish schools. Another former staff member, a Palestinian who oversaw the *Ma'arachim* program during its inception, told me:

I think it's become more difficult to enter schools, to enter formal institutions. There is a lot more suspicion. [School officials ask]: "Who are these people? What are their political perspectives?" One of our coordinators was yelled at in a school because somebody there saw that we had an activity against the [2009 Gaza War]. So she was yelled at, "You present yourselves as a dialogue organization, and then you speak out against the military!"

This comment captures the dual set of suspicions Sadaka Reut faces within the Jewish community: first, as an organization challenging the segregation typical of Israeli society by bringing together Jews and Palestinians; and second, due to its pro-peace perspective, which is a marginalized perspective within the Jewish Israeli community (Hermann, 2006). Taken together, these suspicions can hamper Sadaka Reut's ability to enter Jewish schools and therefore potentially limit its ability to recruit youth to BCP.

The perception of Sadaka Reut as an organization promoting a Palestinian agenda also illustrates the degree to which Sadaka Reut's discourse differs from the dominant Jewish Israeli narrative. Potential difficulty in entering schools is therefore only the top of the iceberg. It is critical for Sadaka Reut to overcome this discursive gap in order to successfully recruit individuals to its programs, and the challenges it faces in doing so are not insignificant. For instance, despite emphasizing a focus on photography in order to attract participants, only four individuals in the Bat Yam group I observed committed to attending all the weekly meetings. Although the size of this group was somewhat atypical, Sadaka Reut's Jewish BCP groups are generally made up of 10 or fewer participants, suggesting that it is difficult to recruit Jewish participants.

A salient question to ask, given the challenges faced by Sadaka Reut, is whether we might view the organization as successful in its attempts to promote social change in the Israeli context. At an individual level, I believe the answer is yes: of the 43 alumni I interviewed, nearly two-thirds are actively engaged with civil society initiatives aimed at changing Israeli society by promoting equality for all Israelis. Among others, alumni endeavors include: establishing a women's leadership program in a rural Palestinian village; organizing the founding of a joint Jewish-Palestinian kindergarten in Haifa; and establishing a community center for low-income Jewish and Palestinian youth in Jaffa. Moreover, many alumni attribute the motivation for their activism to their participation in Sadaka Reut. For example, Dafna, a Jewish alumna who is active in several organizations focusing on the rights of refugees in Israel, spoke about Sadaka Reut's role in helping her develop a belief that, "what you do has an influence, even if it influences in a small way—that is something that is definitely a fire under my feet." Likewise, Bayan, a Palestinian woman who participated in the BCP program during 2006-2009, said that as a result of her involvement in the program, "I thought that I can change things. They give you the feeling of, you want to change things, change them."

Additionally, the narratives of all alumni I interviewed explicitly critiqued institutional policies that enable ethno-national discrimination. Here, too, individuals credit Sadaka Reut for providing them with the awareness that facilitated development of a critical perspective. For instance, Anna, who as stated above joined Sadaka Reut with no political background, told me:

My awareness grew exponentially, in a way I couldn't possibly have imagined, and my knowledge expanded so much during the three years [during which I was a participant in *Building a Culture of Peace*] . . . because I was in an environment that constantly addressed questions and topics that [other forums in] Israeli society don't address.

Anna emphasized that her awareness resulted from being pushed constantly by organization facilitators to ask questions about the reality around her. This illustrates how Sadaka Reut helped participants develop the ability to understand and critique structural dynamics and constraints in Israeli society. Critical awareness cannot be equated with action, of course. Yet, views promoting ethno-national equality in Israel contrast significantly with the dominant perspective among Jewish Israelis (Hermann et al., 2011), suggesting the role Sadaka Reut can play in facilitating the transformation of consciousness that is a necessary precursor to activism (McAdam, 1982).

Even among those alumni who were ideologically aligned with Sadaka Reut prior to joining, most came to the organization with significantly less socio-political awareness than they acquired through BCP participation. Indeed, more than one-third of my interviewees said they had limited awareness of socio-political issues prior to joining Sadaka Reut, and most of those with some prior political awareness explained that they obtained much more nuanced perspectives through BCP. In other words, even for those who were drawn to the organization because it meshed with their own ideological stance, Sadaka Reut enabled a much deeper level of awareness than they previously held.

Still, while Sadaka Reut has successfully developed a cadre of critical, active alumni, it reaches

only a few hundred individuals annually. In the words of Akil, a Palestinian alumnus, “[What Sadaka Reut does] is very important, but unfortunately it isn’t going anywhere because it works at a very, very small level.” Likewise, Efrat reflected: “Where I think that [Sadaka Reut] has failed is in the fact that the change is relatively small. We have access to 200 [or] 300 youth in the best-case scenario, and we create change with them. And it’s possible to make that change larger.”

Thus, even as Sadaka Reut’s programmatic approach has shifted to emphasize personal connections to systemic issues, and in ways that enable the organization to work in formal education settings, Sadaka Reut faces significant challenges in finding participants. This challenge can be attributed to a number of factors, among them seems to be the difficulty of reaching out to mainstream youth when mainstream society is shifting further to the right.

So how can we characterize Sadaka Reut’s potential to educate for social transformation? A close analysis of the organization’s work highlights the tension it faces between its mission and its environment. On the one hand, as my interviewees suggest, Sadaka Reut’s model has been successful in contributing to individual change and motivating participation in social change endeavors. On the other hand, Israel’s socio-political context places severe constraints on and challenges for Sadaka Reut—particularly in terms of its ability to recruit greater numbers of participants.

Thus, this analysis points to the necessity of re-examining what it means for programs aimed at social transformation to be “successful,” particularly within areas of ongoing conflict. As discussed above, much of the scholarship on such programs asks whether they enable shifts in the knowledge, attitudes or behaviors of individual participants. By this measure, Sadaka Reut is successful. However, this question ignores the socio-political conditions that can facilitate or constrain programmatic work—conditions that, for Sadaka Reut, can make promoting large-scale social change seem like a futile task.

For us to truly assess the contribution of both formal and, in Sadaka Reut’s case, non-formal education to social change, we must investigate more than the relationship between intervention and individual outcome. We need to pay greater attention to the ways societal forces shape educational endeavors. Doing so can help us, as scholars and practitioners alike, reflect on the work that has already been done, and more effectively imagine possibilities for moving the project of progressive social change forward.

Notes:

- [1]. This article was written with significant input from the co-directors of Sadaka Reut.
- [2]. Bat Yam is an Israeli city south of Tel Aviv.
- [3]. All names utilized in this article are pseudonyms.
- [4]. All quotations in this manuscript were translated from Hebrew by the author.
- [5]. I refer to Israeli citizens of Palestinian descent as Palestinians because during my fieldwork, it was the term most individuals utilized to define themselves. The official government designation for this group is “Israeli Arab,” or just “Arab.”
- [6]. With the exception of a handful of schools where Jewish and Palestinian citizens study together, the education system in Israel is segregated, and the curriculum utilized differs

among the four streams of education: secular Jewish, religious Jewish, ultra-Orthodox Jewish, and Arab.

- [7]. Mizrahi, or from *Edot HaMizrah* (literally: “Communities of the East”) is a term referring to Jews of North African and Middle Eastern descent, as well those whose families immigrated from the Caucasus.
- [8]. Ashkenazi is a term utilized to categorize Jews who are of Central and European descent.
- [9]. Bekerman and Zembylas (2012) focus on peace education as it is implemented within the context of formal education, that is, schools bringing together students from different sides of conflict (Jews/Palestinians and Greek Cypriots/Turkish Cypriots). However, peace education as a whole includes both formal education and non-formal endeavors such as the encounter programs implemented by Sadaka Reut.
- [10]. At a facilitator training I attended in the summer of 2010, one of the sessions focused explicitly on developing yearly curricula for each group within this flexible structure.
- [11]. *Ma'arachim* groups are by nature uninational because of Israel's segregated education system.
- [12]. I did not observe a Palestinian group for several reasons. First, my Arabic skills were not advanced enough for me to understand much of what would have been said in these meetings. Second, I felt that as a non-Palestinian, my presence could shift the dynamic of the group in a potentially negative manner.
- [13]. *Arsim*, plural for *ars*, is a pejorative slang term in Hebrew used to refer to a stereotype of low-class young men.
- [14]. The Bedouins in Israel are a semi-nomadic group indigenous to the Negev Desert in the south of the country.
- [15]. One salient difference expressed in the discussion was about the significance of binational partnership for Jews and for Palestinians, and how these differ. Several Jewish participants in this discussion, for example, suggested that the space for binationalism in Jewish society is so constrained that when Jewish participants end their affiliation with Sadaka Reut, their options are “basically to leave the country or to return to the mainstream.” While several Palestinians commented that the openness within Palestinian society towards binational endeavors is also limited, they agreed that constraints within Jewish society are much greater. Other differences of opinion during this discussion related to whether binational partnership should be a *tool* or a *goal*, and whether Sadaka Reut as an organization is *using* binationalism or *developing* binationalism among its participants.
- [16]. Similar perceptions can be found among individuals affiliated with Sadaka Reut, as well. For instance, one alumna told me, “Sadaka Reut tries to balance out what happens on the street, but if the street is super on the side of the Jews, Sadaka is super on Palestinian side.”
- [17]. I was told repeatedly, by numerous staff members, that Sadaka Reut has had no difficulties entering Palestinian schools, for two reasons: first, *Ma'arachim* workshops present one of the few opportunities available in these schools to address, either directly or indirectly, issues connected to the Palestinian narrative. Second, Palestinian youth on the whole have fewer opportunities to engage in extra-curricular activities than their Jewish counterparts, which makes Sadaka Reut's presence in schools as a recruiting tool for BCP a welcome one.

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Promoting Civic Engagement in Schools in Non-Democratic Settings: Transforming the Approach and Practices of Iranian Educators

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Established in 2011, the Online School of Civic Education (the Online School) is intended to give Iranian teachers and educators the opportunity to reflect, experiment, and create classroom experiences aimed at teaching their students how to think, rather than what to think. The Online School was developed to provide teachers and educators inside Iran with an alternative to existing top-down, ideological, and teacher-centered civic education in Iran. The Online School's approach is to encourage teachers and, by extension, their students to think independently and analytically about their surroundings through activities and reflection. We argue that it is possible to provide teachers with experiential training in democratic civic education despite and within the context of the existing civic education paradigm in Iran, which defines citizenship in terms of devotion to religious ideology. We argue that, through this model, not only can teachers gain meaningful insight into the practice of democratic citizenship, but they also can enact changes in their classroom behavior and lessons that pass such understandings on to their students.

This article has been written to examine the experiences of an online school dedicated to educating teachers of students ages 11-15 in Iran. The Online School for Civic Education[2] (the Online School) was established in 2011 to provide an alternative approach to promoting civic education through an innovative and interactive curriculum.

In this article we will argue that it is possible to provide teachers with experiential training in democratic civic education despite and within the context of the existing civic education paradigm in Iran, which defines citizenship in terms of religious ideology. We argue that, through this model, not only can teachers gain meaningful insight into the practice of democratic citizenship, but they also can enact changes in their classroom behavior and implement lessons that transfer such understandings to their students.

Societal Context in Iran

Established as an Islamic Republic in 1979,[3] the current Iranian system of government is complex, including both democratic and authoritarian components; Iran is the world's only theocracy (Chehabi, 2001). Its government is characterized by a dual system of publicly elected officials and appointed religious experts, including the Supreme Leader. Ultimate power lies with the Supreme Leader, as he is the final arbiter on matters and disputes among the various branches of government, has the power to remove the president, and has the final say on interpreting constitutional rights.

Beyond Shia Islam, the Iranian government recognizes only the religions of Sunni Islam, Zoroastrianism, Judaism, and Christianity. The Baha'i faith is not recognized [4] and the 1% of the population who practice this faith are discriminated against by the government. Members of minority faiths in Iran, including Sunnis, are regularly denied rights to government jobs and access to resources.

The Constitution of Iran is openly non-democratic and gives citizens limited rights as long as they are in line with religious doctrine (Chehabi & Keshavarzian, 2012). Despite the fact that freedom of expression is granted in the Constitution, the conservative-controlled judiciary has convicted and jailed most outspoken journalists, bloggers, and students, and continues to do so. Currently, Iran is second (after Turkey) on the list of countries that have imprisoned the most journalists (Committee to Protect Journalists, 2012).

Still, Iranians have shown resilience in their ability to carve out spaces for creativity, individuality, and sociality that run counter to the ideologies promulgated by the Iranian government. Iranian private life is characterized by broad expression, freedom, and social behavior behind closed doors. This manifests in a variety of ways, for example, the proliferation of a critical art community, underground parties, and resistance music in the form of hip hop, folk, and rock music. More subversively, various young people have begun to delay marriage and participate in years of dating and non-monogamous relationships before, if ever, choosing to marry (Tait, 2008).

Civic Engagement and Religion as the Measure of Good Citizenship

Citizenship in Iran is defined within its religious context. The good citizen in Iran is a religious person (Vajargah, 2012). Government and non-governmental materials that discuss good behavior and proper citizenship often quote popular religious leaders and imams to provide legitimacy for their claims. For instance, a brochure encouraging neighbors to be cognizant of their noise levels quotes a religious leader who declares that treating neighbors with respect is a duty to God. This message is propagated through media, public meetings such as Friday prayers, and, of course, Iran's education system. The main website for the municipality of Tehran has a section on citizenship which states that "Islam has transparent and direct commands to govern the social interaction of humans not only in regards to moral perfection but also for how to build an ideal society" (Tehran Municipality, 2013). It is important to note that patriotism and religious duty are intertwined in Iran. One Muslim adage says, "Love of one's homeland is love of God." In Iran, love of God, country, and government are inextricably linked, making separation of church and state incongruent with the main aims of the government.

Iran's Education System and Its Dominant Paradigm

The primary motive of Iran's education system is to create loyal and obedient citizens. The primary school textbooks in social sciences and history reveal the state's intent to introduce Islamic ideals and behaviors to youth. As one textbook introduction explains:

The purpose of this book and teaching is not to memorize and answer things correctly . . . The aim is to develop from the children of today men and women who are worthy, committed, constructive, goodwill [*sic*], kind, highly chivalrous,

and God-loving. [With these qualities] and with a heart full of faith, they will stand up to spread the life-giving ideology of Islam and the Islamic Revolution, help to prosper the great Islamic country, rush to help the oppressed and struggle against the arrogant and help to move the helpless and the weak of the world. (Shorish, 1988, p. 60)

In Iran, becoming a good citizen means learning to be a devout servant of God. Among the important concepts in Islamic citizenship is the concept of *adab*, cleansing oneself of corrupted thoughts through discipline, a concept that is promoted through textbooks, families, and communities. Other important concepts are: a) *tarbiyah*, learning through direct instruction; b) *talim*, learning through indirect ways, including media; and c) *marafah*, learning through prayer and communication with God.

One review of early childhood education textbooks (Shorish, 1988 p. 61) highlights that the development of the Islamic person occurs not only through these various ways of learning but also through obedience to the teacher. The student is required to be grateful and appreciative that the teacher provides instruction about how to be good and respectful, in addition to how to read and write. This promotion of obedience to teacher, text, and religion is reiterated throughout students' education in Iran. As stated by the Ministry of Education, "The major problem which this country has had is with those people that do not believe anything" (Shorish, 1988, p. 64).

To achieve these goals, the Ministry of Education recruits and prepares teachers who adhere to the official rules and ideology. To become a teacher, an applicant must confirm the following: 1) his/her belief in the officially recognized religions; 2) agreement and compliance with the rules of Islam; 3) intention to recognize and abide by the authority of the supreme leader; 4) lack of history with political parties; and 5) being a moral person. In the interviews, Ministry of Education staff question potential teachers about their thoughts, beliefs, ideology, and political affiliations rather than their skills and knowledge in the subject areas. The main goal is to create and sustain a cohort of teachers dedicated to the Iranian Constitution and Islamic authority.

In addition to requiring teachers to be devout, the Ministry of Education also seeks to prepare teachers mainly in relation to theory. Prospective teachers who finish high school enter a two-year program in the Ministry-run teacher training center which qualifies them to teach in primary and middle schools (kindergarten through 8th grade). The main topics of this training focus on principles and methods of teaching, history of education, psychology of education, and religious education. Without any experiential or skills training, teachers begin working in classrooms immediately after graduation.

Therefore, the concept of civic education in Iran, with its preference for obedience and discipline over critical exploration, is in contrast to democratic civic education. Any civic behavior or initiative must be carried out within this rigid framework of reasoning. Civic activism or engagement cannot occur under any other premise, such as democracy, self-realization, or community building, that might run counter to loyalty to the regime and the prescribed notions of religious duty. Social capital or community-building that does not occur in the name of propagation of religious duty or promotion of the state is seen as disruptive and counter to the dominant official paradigm.

Alternative Approach: The Online School for Civic Education

The Online School for Civic Education was established in 2011 by a group of Iranians working at an international development foundation in the United States in response to the need for an alternative approach to civic education in Iran. The Online School is in the Persian language and web-based. It allows any teacher of students aged 11-15 across Iran to apply to participate in its three online courses: “Critical Thinking,” “Rule of Law,” and “Citizenship.” Each six- to eight-week course is offered twice a year. So far, each course has been offered a total of six times. Courses are offered at no charge to the participants. These online courses offered by the Online School are designed to mirror the same pedagogy that teachers are encouraged to apply in their own classrooms.

The Online School’s approach is to give teachers an opportunity to reflect on and practice democratic concepts of citizenship and civic engagement through dialogue and participation in a series of online forum discussions, chat sessions, and other online activities in the Persian language. In contrast to the official definition of civic engagement in Iran, which emphasizes religious duty and obedience to religious/government leaders, the Online School aims to promote civic engagement defined as individual activities in formal or informal settings that build a sense of connection and commitment to society (Diller, 2001). To build this understanding of civic engagement, the Online School focuses on providing a space for teachers in Iran to communicate their personal perspectives on citizenship and civic engagement concepts. Through this approach, civic engagement is not defined by duty or obedience, but rather collaboration and cooperation of citizens to influence their environment. The forum discussions within each course are facilitated to promote robust communication, mutual understanding, and small-group work among the teachers. Teachers are then encouraged to practice similar democratic forms of engagement in their classrooms, for example, promoting self-governance and decision-making among their students rather than exercising control over their behavior.

To participate in a course, teachers must complete an online application form in Persian that includes questions about the type of school—private, public or community-based—they teach in, the subject matters they teach in classrooms, the age group of students they work with, and their teaching and personal experience with the subject matter of courses offered by the Online School. They are also required to indicate how the course will help them address issues in their classrooms. Usually 60 to 70 applicants from across the country apply for each course. These applicants teach a variety of subjects from social sciences to sciences and arts. For each course, the top 30 to 35 applicants are selected by a committee that includes the course facilitator, the school program officer, and the course expert. Criteria for selection include a demonstrated interest in the topic areas, evidence that the applicant takes an active role in his/her teaching, and a commitment to teaching new concepts.

Teachers participating in the courses are from all the provinces throughout Iran, bringing ethnic, religious, and social diversity and interaction to the online platform. In each course, the Online School is committed to including religious minorities, such as Sunnis and Baha’is, and teachers from rural and underserved areas. More than 50% of teachers who participate in the courses are from provinces other than Tehran (the capital); these include Gilan and Mazandaran in the North,

and Sistan and Baluchistan in the South. This vast geographic span is notable because ethnicities and religions in Iran tend to be geographically concentrated (for instance, the majority of Sunnis live in the South, while Kurds and other ethnic minorities, such as the Azeris, live in the North). Course participants are also from public, private, and community-based schools that work with labor and immigrant children. Diversity along different dimensions helps to foster discussions in the online forums and provides an opportunity for teachers to learn more about other communities as well as school settings in different parts of the country. It also creates a network of teachers who continue collaborating and interacting after they complete the course. To make the courses accessible for low-speed Internet users, the resources and content are all text-based. Once logged in, the participant can download the course materials to review offline.

The Online School Approach

The Online School's approach is defined by a three-step process: 1) teacher awareness; 2) adaptation to context; and 3) classroom implementation. These steps are described briefly below:

1. *Teacher awareness.* The first step is providing curriculum on civic education subjects, such as stereotyping, diversity, tolerance, equality and fairness, conflict resolution, and citizen rights and responsibilities, with a new subject introduced every two weeks. The curriculum consists of introductory definitions of the terms and concepts. It does not aim to describe the subject matter in detail but rather to spur discussion in the forums and chat sessions. In the related forums teachers are asked to discuss the current topics using their own personal experience. For example, during the introductory week about stereotyping, teachers are asked to write about a situation in which they have been discriminated against, socially or culturally, and to express their feelings and thoughts about why this occurred. Sharing these experiences helps create a shift from personal narratives to multi-voice, where all voices are included in one platform. Once the narratives are shared, the course facilitator guides the discussion towards problem analysis and reasoning. This is designed to help teachers generalize from their own perspective and draw conclusions. An essential way for teachers to learn about each other's perspectives, the forums provide opportunities for robust dialogue among the course participants.
2. *Adaptation to the context.* The second step happens the following week when strategies, games, and methods relevant to the subject matter are introduced for application in the teachers' classrooms. The focus of forum discussions for this step is the appropriateness and relevance of the game or method in the classroom and in various Iranian contexts. At this stage, teachers are encouraged to redesign the games and activities to make them implementable based on their own classroom settings, and to report on their suggested changes and opinions in the forum discussions.
3. *Classroom implementation.* The third step begins once teachers implement the new activities in their classrooms. During this phase, teachers report in detail on the activities they implemented in their classrooms, while also sharing their analysis and evaluation of that effort. At times, teachers also share short videos, sound clips or scripts of students' reactions and/or responses with the other course participants.

Small Group Collaboration

To promote collaborative learning and engagement, teachers are required to form small groups to develop lesson plans, implement them separately in their classrooms, and report on them in the forum discussions. After the introductory week for each course, when teachers get to know each

other through a series of online ice-breaking games, they form groups of three to four people. Teachers from different ethnic, geographic, or cultural backgrounds are encouraged to partner with one another to bring in different perspectives on social, cultural, and educational issues. For example, in one of the rounds of the Citizenship course, a Shia teacher asked a Baha'i course participant to join one group. The Shia teacher explained: "I have never had any encounter with Baha'is in my own country. I did not even know that Baha'is have their own schools in Iran. As a citizen, I want to learn more about the lives and perspectives of other citizens of my country and this online course is the only chance I have to expose myself to learn more." Many teachers also mentioned that these small groups motivate them to introduce creativity and innovation in their way of teaching. For instance, Arezou, a math teacher in Tehran, attended one of Zahra's classrooms to learn more about her methods of teaching math. In several forums, she reported that she applied these methods in her own classroom.

Vignettes: Case Studies of Critical Praxis

This section presents three vignettes from the Online School. The occurrences portrayed took place in different courses offered throughout the year 2011-2012, and serve to show the changes that may result from the Online School's approach toward teacher development. Information for the vignettes has been gathered from forum discussions and simultaneous chat sessions. The stories are notable primarily because of the political and social context of Iran within which they occur. They are also notable given the significant limitations of providing guidance and instruction online. The vignettes follow different teachers in different contexts and courses to provide a variety of viewpoints and perspectives.

These vignettes were chosen because they demonstrate the teachers' lack of familiarity with civic engagement concepts, utilizing the definition described earlier in this paper of civic engagement as collaborative activities that build a commitment to society. The vignettes also demonstrate the depth of exchange between teachers about new topics, the shifts that occur in the teacher-student relationship, and the changes that teachers make in their classroom activities.

My dream country. The following example was chosen to highlight the lack of teacher-student interaction prior to engagement with the Online School and the change the teacher implemented in her classroom, using one of the learned activities as the basis for increased interaction. In this example, genuine engagement occurs between teacher and students that helps the teacher understand her students' lives and allows her to encourage her students' self-expression. In the first week of the Citizenship course, course participants are required to describe an ideal country that they would create if they could. Teachers reflected on the question in the online forum and then began to employ the activity in their classrooms. The following is an account of the implementation in one classroom in Tehran.

Fatemeh is a math teacher for 11-year-old girls in a public school in Northern Tehran, a more affluent part of the city. In her self-reflective forum of the week, she wrote:

I was amazed to read all different points of view of my fellow colleagues about their dream country. I could read between the lines about who they are and what they suffer from. I was interested to implement this activity with my students to read and learn about their imagination. In the last 15 minutes of the class, I gave

each one of my students a paper and asked them to write about their dream country. I was shocked how little I knew about my students though I've spent almost five hours a day with them. I also observed that these kids reflect on the social issues of their society in their writings, issues that are not directly related to them, but are out there around them and they can sense [them]. Through this activity I learned that one of my students' fathers is a political prisoner. My student wrote: "In my dream country nobody would be in jail because of his political views. I wish to live in a country [where] there is no political prisoner nor are any prisoners without a family to visit him and support him. I'd like to live in a country where everyone is free to speak up!" Another student wrote: "I wish to live in a country [where] there are no street children, no poor children and no sanctions. In my dream world children don't need to work to support their families. When I asked my parents why some people are poor, they said because they are not educated. But I think this is not a right answer. With social discrimination everywhere, poor people should not be blamed for being uneducated and poor.

Fatemeh reported that she plans to introduce the activity on the first day of school from now on so that she can learn about her students' concerns and beliefs and address their questions throughout the semester.

In a simultaneous chat session organized as part of the Online School platform/experience, another teacher said that now she feels more responsible for her students. She wrote:

I've been a teacher for more than 22 years. In the past two weeks [of engaging in this course] I came to the conclusion that being a teacher is beyond teaching; it's about the ability to make connections with your students, to understand each individual's needs and have rapport with them, not as your students but as individuals with different personalities, needs, and passion to learn.

Hurricane Sandy. This second example focuses on a teacher raising the awareness of her students about their role in their surroundings and with their peers. One part of the Citizenship course focuses on various community-service learning models for making change and engaging in society. One of the forum discussions on this matter was on community activism during Hurricane Sandy in the U.S.

Inspired by this forum discussion, Negar, a history teacher for girls aged 10 to 12, decided to show her class some photos of community engagement after the hurricane that were published in newspapers in the United States. She reported:

There were six students of 10 years old in my class yesterday. I used a laptop to show my students pictures of the community engagement after the Sandy storm, such as some neighbors distributing food and drinks in the streets, some providing electricity, etc. I showed the pictures on my laptop instead of the projector intentionally. For each picture, I asked the students to describe what they see and what the people in the picture are doing. I asked them if they have ever

experienced working together for a good cause and how they felt about it. In the beginning, the students were struggling and pushing each other so that they could better see the photos. Some of them were unable to see because there was not enough room for the whole class to clearly see the monitor. Gradually, as we opened the discussion about cooperation and collaboration of communities and individuals to overcome the hurricane damage, I noticed that students who were in front tried to open a space for those in the back and let them in the circle around the monitor. In the end of this 40-minute activity, I asked my students to reflect about today's experience. Three of them said that in the beginning they only thought about their individual selves and how they could get access to the photos, but by the end, they felt that they should contribute to this activity by providing space for those who were in the back and could not see the photos.

This is an example of how the teacher learned from the exchanges and discussions with fellow teachers in the Online School forums and then created an activity to raise awareness in the classroom. By using photos, discussion, and physical space, the teacher was able to raise student awareness. Rather than having the focus on the teacher or the curriculum, the dynamic interaction as a result of the physical space and presentation of the discussion allowed students to experience citizen engagement rather than simply reading or memorizing it.

Rule-Makers. In the final example, a teacher decided to remove herself from a process to give students an opportunity to go beyond simple awareness and instead increase their sense of responsibility, taking ownership of their surroundings, and creating change around them.

In the beginning of each course, the Online School provides teacher participants with activities and games to help teachers engage their students with the concept of rule of law and collaborate in designing their class rules for the semester. Sara, a literature teacher for elementary and high school students, decided to implement an activity based on what she observed in her students. She reported:

We had an exhibition in our school and had to create something for it. I combined my high school and elementary classes and asked them to collaborate to come up with their plans for the exhibition. I noticed that the high school group ignored the elementary students. At first I tried to facilitate the interaction to give each group a time to speak up, but then I realized I've been the center of the discussion. I decided to step aside. I told both groups that I would leave the class for 15 minutes, and that they would have to come up with the plan and let me know once I came in. If they didn't succeed, I told them, then we wouldn't be able to take a part in the exhibition. After 15 minutes when I came in, there was a white sheet of paper on the wall with each [student's] responsibilities. They told me that they tried to use the method from the first day of class when we came up with the class rules for the semester. I realized that I should not underestimate my students' ability to collaborate with each other. What I can do is help them understand the tools they can use to work together and empower them to believe that they can.

This method of teachers getting out of the way is a novel approach to education in Iran. Because

the education system is teacher-centered and focused on memorization of concepts, students rarely have opportunities to interact with peers and thereby experience concepts of citizenship and leadership. Allowing students to determine the rules of engagement changes the level of responsibility. In a country where rules and policies are determined at the highest levels by political/religious leaders and then disseminated in a top-down approach, this methodology reverses citizens' roles from rule-followers or rule-breakers to becoming rule-makers.

Conclusion

Within the context of Iran, simply engaging teachers and students in dialogue about their lives, their challenges, and their roles as citizens is a substantial divergence from status quo and a positive step towards countering the norms that block democratic development. The results from the Online School for Civic Education demonstrate that it is possible to change classroom activities that can move a society, even a non-democratic society, toward building a citizenship that is critical, engaged, and independent. Through self-awareness, risk-taking, and small-scale activities, participants in the Online School's courses are increasing their commitment and actions to change the values, practices, and thinking of future generations of Iranians across the country. The Online School brings into account multi-vocality and diverse points of view which, in turn, foster awareness, collaboration, and engagement among teachers in Iran to redefine the meaning of citizenship and civic education in their classrooms.

Notes:

- [1]. This article does not represent the views of Eurasia Foundation.
- [2]. For privacy purposes, the name of the school is not mentioned in this article; it is referred to as "The Online School for Civic Education."
- [3]. The 1979 Iranian Revolution, which overthrew the Pahlavi dynasty (known for its authoritarian and secular agenda), gave birth to the Islamic Republic with Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini as the Supreme Leader.
- [4]. According to the Iranian government, the Baha'i belief system is heretical to Islam, particularly because of the Baha'i belief in prophets that came after Mohammad.

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Teacher Education for Social Change: Transforming a Content Methods Course Block

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This article analyzes data from a qualitative practitioner-research case study in which four university faculty members attempted to disrupt the hegemonic domestication of candidates enrolled in an undergraduate teacher education program. During the semester prior to their student teaching, 16 candidates at a large public university in the southeastern U.S. enrolled in four content methods courses. Taught by the authors of this article, the curriculum of these courses emphasized social justice dimensions of teaching rather than just focusing on skills and strategies. Drawing from the multiple data sources, the authors highlight the possibilities and limitations of teacher education for social change and argue that greater resources are needed for teacher education to effect true social change.

“The field of teacher education has not taken seriously its role to prepare teachers as activists and advocates of social justice.” (Irvine, 2004)

If P-12 public schools are to serve more than a domesticating function or paternalistic view toward students that reproduces status quo inequities (Freire, 1985, 1998), teacher educators in university settings must disrupt the hegemonic domestication of candidates enrolled in teacher education programs. That is, teacher educators must heed Irvine’s (2004) call to prepare teacher education candidates (hereafter referred to simply as “candidates”) to be activists and social justice advocates. This qualitative practitioner-research case study examines how four university faculty members attempted to “flip” the classroom during the candidates’ methods block (one semester in which a single cohort of candidates takes all content methods courses together). As instructors of these courses, the authors sought to place equity and justice at the center of the curriculum rather than in the margins.

The context for this study was a large state university in the southeastern United States. The institution, located in a suburb of a large city, has one of the state’s highest numbers of teacher education graduates. The focus of this article is the Elementary Teacher Education Program, which is housed in the College of Education.

The community surrounding the campus is largely conservative, socially and politically. In the 1960s and 1970s, this community experienced a population boom, due to White flight from the nearby Black-majority city. Around this time, fearing increased crime, local government officials voted against legislation that would connect a passenger rail system to the city and since then

have actively resisted all rail projects. Later, the local school district, pressured by parents and community members who were upset that science textbooks contained information about evolution without also discussing creationism, placed stickers in every high school biology textbook stating that “evolution is a theory, not a fact,” an action later ruled unconstitutional by a federal judge. The local county sheriff’s office became the first one in the state authorized by the Department of Homeland Security to participate in ICE’s 287(g) program, which has been used to identify more than 180,000 “illegal immigrants” for deportation nationwide since 2006. As of late September 2010, the program had been used to identify 14,692 undocumented immigrants in the state, prompting three other counties to sign agreements with ICE.

This brief description of the community in which we work is to make clear that our context is not an idyllic bastion of progressivism. We struggle with the same kinds of discourses of heteronormativity[1] and “imperialist white supremacist capitalist patriarchy” (hooks, 2009, p. 15) that our candidates bring as educators.

In what follows, we situate our study within social justice teacher education, outline the methodology we used in conducting the study, share our results, and conclude with implications for teacher education focused on social justice. We make the argument that a concerted effort to make cross-course connections is a necessary step toward developing elementary teachers committed to progressive social change. We also argue that teacher education programs must go even further in creating institutional structures that put social justice at the center, rather than in the margins, of the entire teacher education program.

A Framework of Social Justice Teacher Education

The term “social justice,” when applied to teacher education, has been appropriated in so many ways that the term has become diluted, often synonymous with offering a multicultural education course or placing candidates in schools with students of color (McDonald & Zeichner, 2009). While different educators and scholars take up different positions on social justice education, such as redistributing resources, developing student agency, or recognizing and affirming all social groups, especially those that have been marginalized, and ensuring their success (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Zeichner, 2009), we argue, following Bell (2007), that each perspective is necessary for education that is socially just:

Social justice is both a process and a goal. The goal of social justice is full and equal participation of all groups in a society that is mutually shaped to meet their needs. Social justice includes a vision of society in which the distribution of resources is equitable and all members are physically and psychologically safe and secure. . . . [S]ocial justice involves social actors who have a sense of their own agency as well as a sense of social responsibility toward and with others, their society, and the broader world in which we live. . . . [T]he goal of social justice education is to enable people to develop the critical analytical tools necessary to understand oppression and their own socialization within oppressive systems, and to develop a sense of agency and capacity to interrupt and change oppressive patterns and behaviors in themselves and in their institutions and communities of which they are a part. (pp. 3-4)

In addition to understanding social justice education as important for all members and groups in a society, we also appreciate the importance of the local-global relationship and how local issues are situated in a global sociopolitical and economic context. For teachers interested in social justice education, these connections are crucial for understanding systemic forms of oppression. Geertz (1983) argued this point when he said that attempts to get at local knowledge involve “a continuous dialectical tacking between the most local of local detail and the most global of global structure in such a way as to bring both into view simultaneously” (p. 69). We want our students to immerse themselves in local school and community contexts and to connect their learning to broader systems of power, privilege, and oppression.

Freire (2004; Freire & Macedo, 1987) argued that before we teach students to read the *word* (literacy or content matter), we must teach them to read the *world* (their socio-historical-political context): “It is impossible to access meaning simply through reading words. One must first read the world within which these words exist . . . any type of education that is coherently progressive has to discuss not only the text but life itself” (Freire, 1997, pp. 304, 320). Knowing their students allows social justice educators to find ways to contextualize learning based on students’ interests, helping students find and seek out relevance and meaning. While teaching content matter and closing achievement gaps are important, the social justice teacher must go further and “not only teach his or her discipline well, but he or she must also challenge the learner to critically think through the social, political, and historic reality within which he or she is a presence” (Freire, 2004, p. 19).

By fostering the development of students’ critical analysis of society, social justice (teacher) education “challenges us to recognize, engage, and critique (so as to transform) any existing undemocratic social practices and institutional structures that produce and sustain inequalities and oppressive social identities and relations” (Leistyna & Woodrum, 1996, p. 2). The point is not simply to engage in a sociopolitical critique of the world; doing so is only a step toward *transforming injustice*. As Freire and Macedo (1987) argued, “reading the word is not preceded merely by reading the world, but by a certain form of *writing* or *rewriting* it, that is, of transforming it by means of conscious, practical work” (p. 35). We draw on this theoretical lens as well as an asset-based and funds-of-knowledge view of students and their families (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992). In doing so, we promote education that is responsive and relevant to the experiences students bring to school (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Villegas & Lucas, 2002) and yet helps shift discourses from meritocracy to hegemony and systems of oppression and domination (Cochran-Smith, 2003; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012). Thus, we perceive social justice education (SJE) and social justice teacher education (SJTE) as complex endeavors that are not reducible simply to a method or methods.

What We Can Learn from Existing SJTE Programs

At least in recent decades, many initial teacher education programs have attempted to improve the preparation of teachers for classrooms with students from diverse backgrounds, but such approaches have merely been “additive” (Banks & Banks, 1995) rather than transformative. There are, however, examples of more concerted efforts to place social justice and equity more at the core of teacher preparation. This section highlights several such examples.

First, studies have examined the role of SJTE among various constituencies, including: a single assignment (Hyland & Heuschkel, 2010; Lynn & Smith-Maddox, 2007; McCrary, 2010), a small group of candidates in a single course (Hoffman-Kipp, 2003), a single group of candidates in a Professional Development School ([PDS]; Farnsworth, 2010), all candidates in a single course (Clark, 2010; Frederick, Cave, & Perencevich, 2010; Mills & Ballantyne, 2010), individual SJTE professors' courses (Sleeter, Torres, & Laughlin, 2004), multiple instructors' teaching and reflecting on different sections of the same course (Athanasos & Larrabee, 2003; Schmidt, Chang, Silva, Lockhart, & Anagnostopoulos, 2012), or a combination of participants (Katsarou, Picower, & Stovall, 2010). Such studies are useful in identifying and describing context-based promises and obstacles from which other faculty members committed to SJTE may learn.

Other studies were conducted at the programmatic, rather than course, level. Morva McDonald (2005; 2008) conducted a comparative case-study of two social justice-based elementary teacher education programs: the Teachers for Tomorrow's Schools Program at Mills College and the Teacher Education Intern Program at San Jose State University. She found that, while there were differences, the two programs demonstrated a commitment to SJTE in their mission statements, course syllabi, accreditation reports, and student handbooks. Teaching practices and assignments were grouped into four categories: attending to individual students, attending to students identified by specific educational needs, attending to students identified by their affiliations with an oppressed group, and attending to the sociopolitical conditions of schooling. What was striking was that most assignments emphasized justice as attending to the needs of individual students. While there were assignments in each of the other three categories, McDonald found that attending to the sociopolitical conditions of schooling had very few assignments and that, unlike assignments in the other areas, they did not connect to candidates' field experiences. Despite these two programs' having an explicit emphasis on SJTE, their curriculum and pedagogy emphasized what Gorski (2009) categorized as conservative and liberal approaches rather than critical.

UCLA's Center X Teacher Education Program (TEP) serves as an example of a systematic, well-planned, and collaborative SJTE program involving over 20 faculty and over 350 students as of 2003 (Cooper, 2006). With a mission to "level the playing field" for low-income students of color in Los Angeles schools (Montaño, et al., 2008, p. 1), faculty divided themselves into four committees to plan and develop the program: Student Development, Curriculum, Faculty Development, and Community. Faculty then used collaborative inquiry to develop cases that addressed their programmatic concerns. TEP committee members, as well as outside university researchers, used a range of data collection measures to document and analyze the ongoing collaborative inquiry process. They conducted faculty professional development geared toward facilitating difficult conversations about race, class, and social justice topics in the classroom; investigated ways to help candidates from a range of backgrounds and experience levels become critical and committed social justice educators; revamped a Community Project required of all candidates so it would be more aligned to state curriculum as well as emphasizing candidates' use of asset over deficit perspectives; and brainstormed ways to engage with the K-12 school community around equity issues. While difficulties arose during the three-day faculty development retreat and following sessions, it was the first time the faculty had come together as a group to inquire into increasing their own knowledge of diversity and social justice so they

could facilitate difficult discussions with their candidates on similar issues (Montaño et al., 2008).

There are certainly other examples of teacher education faculty, collaborations among faculty, and entire programs based on SJTE (e.g., Evergreen State, see McDonald & Zeichner, 2009), and we don't mean to exclude any others or to pretend this is an exhaustive list. However, looking at the nature of existing approaches can inform others interested in a more radical transformation of teacher education for social change and critical praxis. In spite of this great body of work, however, as Zeichner (2009) argued, such efforts do little to effect the systemic, structural changes required to produce social justice educators capable of transforming their classrooms and communities toward greater justice: "Most of this work on social justice teacher education in the U.S. thus far seems to focus on the actions of individual teacher educators in their college and university classrooms and has not included . . . proposals for structural changes in teaching as an occupation and teacher education." (p. 148). Similarly, McDonald and Zeichner (2009), citing Darling-Hammond (2006), asserted that "[r]ecent research has indicated that the impact of teacher education programs on prospective teachers is much more powerful when there is a unified vision of teaching and learning than when attention to a goal exists only in some program components (p. 605).

This study is significant as it offers an example of the possibilities that arise from a collaboratively-planned programmatic change toward SJTE, especially considering the geographical and sociopolitical context of the program is in a suburban community located within the deep south of the U.S. While this study marks our first effort toward such a program, we hope it will offer other social justice teacher educators some useful insights in designing similar programs.

Methodology

Context

In the elementary teacher education program where this study took place, candidates take 45 credit hours of general education courses and 81 hours in their major field of study (in this case, elementary and early childhood education). In their senior year, one semester before student teaching, candidates are required to complete an elementary "methods block," in which they must successfully complete four content methods courses (language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies), in conjunction with a weekly field experience. Teacher education candidates take the methods block as a cohort (maximum of 25 students), two methods courses one day during the week and two courses on another day. In this large teacher education program, there are approximately 10 methods block cohorts in the fall semester and five cohorts in the spring semester. It is important to note that candidates are with their methods instructors, face-to-face, for 10 weeks of the 15-week semester. During the last five weeks of the semester, candidates are fully immersed in their "diverse" field placements (i.e., working with students from diverse racial backgrounds, ethnic backgrounds, language backgrounds, and/or socioeconomic backgrounds).

We are four out of more than 15 elementary methods block instructors, and we represent the four core content areas. At the start of the project, two of us were in our second year of a tenure-track

position, one was in the third year of a tenure-track position, and one was in the sixth year. We are a diverse faculty: heterosexual, bisexual, homosexual, White, Black, and Asian, American citizens and internationals, novices and veterans of social justice teaching. Before we even began to conceptualize this new program, we discovered as colleagues that we were each exploring some aspect of social justice pedagogy within our specializations and independently grappling with integrating social justice into our teaching. We found it troubling that social justice is far from being at the core of the teacher education program. While diversity is institutionalized as an important mission, more is required than simply including a course or two on multicultural issues. Two foundational courses in our teacher education program, “Education of Exceptional Students” and “Exploring Sociocultural Perspectives on Diversity in Educational Contexts,” directly address multicultural issues and disability, whereas in other courses, instructors are free to choose whether or not to make social justice a core foundation of the courses. This is clear when candidates arrive in our courses during their senior-year methods block, often confessing that they learned about diversity in only two courses during their entire program of study. A dominant belief shared by candidates and instructors in this program is that the methods block courses, in particular, are to be about technical “methods,” “strategies,” or “tools,” rather than interconnected to larger multicultural and sociopolitical issues. We find it problematic that undergraduates who choose to be education majors may complete an entire four-year degree program with few, if any, courses that challenge meritocracy and interrogate power and privilege. As Freire (2004) argued, “Radical pedagogy must never make concessions to the trickeries of neoliberal ‘pragmatism,’ which reduces the educational practice to the technical-scientific education of learners, *training* rather than *educating*” (p. 19; emphasis in the original). Our goal in this collective endeavor was to challenge the dominant training paradigm of our teacher education program by facilitating the development of candidates capable of enacting education for liberation rather than mere training.

In the fall of 2011, we developed a special themed methods block, the “social justice cohort,” and advertised our newly developed option to upcoming seniors using flyers and direct classroom engagement. The response rate was low, partly because the time slots and field placement locations offered were ill-suited for some candidates. While not officially named and recognized as a themed methods block cohort with a social justice focus, the teaching philosophies of the methods instructors within this cohort were underpinned by their ideas of teaching for social change (i.e., social justice). The intended curriculum was made explicit because it would impact the types of conversations and learning that began and developed in each of our classroom spaces. Scott taught language arts methods through the vehicle of critical literacies, deconstructing a range of print and multimedia texts to interrogate how they position the reader, whose perspective is included and whose is left out, and whose interests are served by such a perspective. Neporcha taught science methods in which candidates were challenged to reflect upon the marginalization of diverse student groups in science education, past and recent science achievement gaps (locally, nationally, and globally), and strategies for making science meaningful (and authentic) for all students. Sohyun taught social studies methods in which candidates read, critiqued, discussed, debated, reflected on, and co-constructed core concepts and ideas of democratic citizenship education including democracy, good citizen, patriotism, immigration, globalization, race, and global citizenship. Patti taught mathematics methods through a lens of equity, power, and privilege, engaging students not only in ways to address the

National Council of Teachers of Mathematics standards, but also to examine how math is connected to the sociocultural experiences of the learner.

We each chose a range of texts for our courses, some more theoretical and research-based and others that were practitioner-oriented. While in math and science it proved a little more challenging to find good social justice texts, there were numerous options for literacy and social studies. We used Rethinking Schools' publications, materials from the Zinn Education Project (<http://zinnedproject.org>), Nancy Schiedewind and Ellen Davidson's (2006) *Open Minds to Equality*, and resources addressing privilege such as Peggy McIntosh's (2008) work and the "Privilege Walk" exercise (see <http://www.whatsrace.org/images/privwalk-long.pdf>). We invited guest speakers to discuss issues in schools, such as hidden disabilities, LGBTQ issues, and teaching immigrant students. We invited candidates to read lots of vignettes and personal accounts of teachers' experiences implementing social justice teaching practices. We involved candidates as much as we could in daily class activities, group projects, and the like so that they could co-construct their own knowledge from a collaborative inquiry perspective. Most of all, we actively sought to identify our candidates' assets and resources so we could build from there. Gender issues and body image issues proved to be a gateway from candidates' worlds to other and more global forms of oppression seen from a systemic (rather than individualistic) perspective. To maintain community, during the 10-week methods block, we (instructors and candidates) held numerous informal and formal dialogues to share ideas, challenges, struggles, and successes, and reflect on our experiences.

Participants

Research participants were all members of this cohort of 16 undergraduate teacher education candidates. At the beginning of the semester, candidates were given an anonymous questionnaire in which we asked them to report demographic characteristics, such as: gender identity, age, racial/ethnic group, sexual identity, socioeconomic status, physical/mental ability, and the type of community in which they grew up (rural, urban, etc.). The majority of the candidates self-identified as female (N=16), heterosexual (N=16), European-American/White (N=13), between 22 and 33 years of age (N=12), with no previous teaching experience (N=16). There were three candidates who self-identified as ethnic minorities (one African American/Black, one Asian/Pacific Islander, and one combination African American/Black and Asian/Pacific Islander). Although we did not define each of the three social classes, two candidates self-identified as working class; thirteen candidates self-identified as middle class, and one candidate self-identified as upper class.

Research Question and Data

This practitioner-research qualitative case study (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2009) addressed the research question: In what ways, if any, did this collaboratively-planned methods block influence candidates' knowledge, beliefs, and practice regarding teaching for social justice? We collected two primary data sources: candidates' weekly reading responses posted in online discussion boards and one whole-class 60-minute semi-structured focus group interview conducted at the end of the methods block but before candidates started their five weeks of full-time field experience. We used the following questions to guide the focus group interview: (1) What is social justice? (2) What experiences in this methods block influenced your future teaching? In what ways? (3) What does social justice look like and sound like in schools?

(4) What would be different if you had gone through a social justice curriculum? (5) What if your class were all White and affluent?

Secondary data sources included candidate lesson plans, unit plans, and in-class discussions. Within their lesson plans and unit plans, participants were asked to make culturally relevant connections (i.e., to explain why this particular lesson was important and relevant to the elementary students in their field placements) and to describe strategies they would use in order to meet the academic needs of at least three different groups of students. In-class discussions required candidates to confront their dominant ideologies and become advocates for change. Weekly reading responses challenged participants' beliefs and perspectives as teachers and citizens; weekly reading responses also allowed participants to make connections between readings, their personal experiences, other university courses, and their experiences in the field placement classroom.

Data were analyzed individually by the four authors and then collectively through a shared folder on Google Drive. This was accomplished by first reading and re-reading data and by listening to the interview recording several times in an effort to become close to the data in an "intimate way" (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 152). We had our graduate research assistant[2] transcribe the focus group interview, and we compared the transcript to the recording to make corrections and adjustments. As we each coded the data set, we individually recorded a rationale for our classifications and prepared a research memo in which we developed broad coding categories based on emerging patterns from the data. Then, we shared our analyses. Together we refined and merged our coding categories, from which we coded data further. From our collective analysis, we identified three themes that were grounded in the data: 1) developing candidate agency; 2) social justice as a mirror and a window; and 3) the values and limitations of social justice cross-course learning/integration. Trustworthiness (Guba & Lincoln, 1989) of the study was strengthened by analyzing multiple written and verbal data sources, engaging in ongoing critical discussions during the study, and triangulating data across sources to support emerging agreements in interpreting the data.

Results

Our one-semester approach to teaching all four methods courses from a social justice perspective gave us insights into the possibilities and limitations of such an approach. Here, we discuss the three themes we identified through our analysis of the data.

From Opening Eyes to Taking Action: Developing Agency as Social Justice Educators

One of the overarching themes across all of our data is the agency candidates developed in the process of becoming social justice educators. In previous semesters in our individual courses, we noted some shifts in candidates' feelings of self-efficacy and commitment to equity and justice. However, in this particular cohort our candidates showed much deeper and comprehensive agentic shifts than those before them. While it is important to note that not all candidates had the same "aha" moments or made the same break-throughs, there were three ways in which these candidates showed more profound, agentic identities: taking new perspectives, negotiating the realities of today's schools, and becoming agents for social change.

Taking new perspectives. Despite already having taken two courses addressing diversity, as well as having taken courses that were “infused” with multicultural education (our institution’s prior approach, an additive model), these teacher candidates indicated overwhelmingly that the social justice emphasis of their four methods courses gave them a new perspective on the world. For instance, they communicated this in their reflective discussion posts: “I have . . . a whole new lens through which I see the world. Now that my eyes have been opened, I cannot go back to the old ways of thinking or say that I am not aware.” “So now it has turned my whole thought on my pedagogy and curriculum upside down.”

Some candidates expressed anger or frustration at not being taught to think critically at an earlier age, for example, saying that it is “a shame that it took me to this level of college” to encounter critical pedagogies. Candidates showed growth in their understanding of injustice as well. Although some were initially resistant to the idea of privilege (e.g., “The ‘White privileges’ stated in this article do not apply to all White people”), candidates eventually recognized their complicity in maintaining oppression. As another student indicated: “I am frustrated there are so many privileges in my life I have grown up believing are just ‘normal,’ therefore making them acceptable. As an educator I must constantly be aware of the messages I send my students.”

Others named specific ways in which their eyes were opened to injustices, saying things like: “Before a few weeks ago, I assumed that racial discrimination was primarily a thing of the past and something that I would not be confronted with on a regular basis.” “When I first came into the class, I felt like I was aware of injustices in society. I had no idea just how prevalent injustices have always been and continue to be today.” Some made broad statements, such as the following, indicating a shift overall: “I feel that with almost all of us, now every aspect of my life I am relating back to social justice.”

Negotiating the realities of today’s schools. Initially our candidates expressed much fear about how education for social justice might fit within some of the realities of today’s elementary classrooms. Many candidates feared “losing their job or offending parents” by teaching controversial material that might not be considered age-appropriate in P-5 classrooms. For some candidates, this fear showed up indirectly. For example: “My first thought was that these are second and third graders. Our [curriculum standards] for Civil Rights are found in fifth grade.” or “I wondered if the children at the younger age are developmentally ready to process and articulate the emotional and independent thinking that would be required.” However, later in the semester, some of the candidates who expressed earlier reluctance shifted their position, as illustrated by the following quote from a candidate’s discussion post:

At first I questioned what was appropriate for elementary-age children. I now believe that kids know more than we think. Something that caught my attention was the sentence [in one of the assigned readings], “Better to talk about premarital sex or homosexuality than be faced with a sixth grader who is pregnant or has committed suicide.” The reason it hit home is because these are issues my children are dealing with. They have friends who are pregnant or have had pregnancy scares. They have friends that are homosexual, and even one that has tried to commit suicide because of it. We can’t pretend that these issues don’t exist; to do so would not be fair to our children.

Another concern was the mandated curriculum in schools, such as textbooks, standards, and high-stakes tests. However, candidates came to a new understanding that what matters most is teaching *children*, not a one-size-fits-all pedagogical approach: “I have learned it is important to teach kids to think critically about everything. To just meet the standards is not enough as a teacher.” “[I don’t want to] take the easy way out with my students. I need to go beyond our state standards and to teach global issues that force our students to think and act as global citizens.” Candidates even turned their critical lens toward our college’s teacher education program, which emphasizes “best” practices. For instance, one candidate commented in a discussion post: “Even the research-based best practices come from a limited perspective. I know that when I get to know the students, I will have to try to understand their perspective and hopefully respond in the best way for them . . . [rather than] pegging them as a type of student that needs this or that particular method of teaching.”

What resonated most with candidates was the use of real teachers’ stories demonstrating ways to address the many barriers or bottlenecks (Gorski et al., 2013) to critical teaching in public schools. For example, candidates stated: “I gained a lot of resources from the articles because in reading the experiences that the teachers had been through I was able to see what I can do if instances like that appear in my classroom.” “I was actually really grateful that I had all those articles to read. It wasn’t that I HAD to read them. I was grateful that I had them TO read.”

Becoming agents for social change. As with most social justice teacher educators, we encountered concerns from our candidates. For instance, several candidates remarked in their discussion boards about how they perceived social justice education to require more work, including being student-centered, as one candidate’s post suggests: “After reading the article on equality, I believe educators have their work cut out for them. We not only must teach the content areas effectively, but now we have to focus on creating a safe, equitable environment for all students.” Others shared concerns about the “age-appropriateness” of teaching equity and justice issues to elementary students, such as this candidate in her reading response: “I wondered if the children at the younger age are developmentally ready to process and articulate the emotional and independent thinking that would be required [of SJE].” Additionally, candidates expressed reluctance to address difficult topics as new teachers, such as this candidate’s discussion post: “it seems like teachers are often concerned about losing their job or offending the parents . . . [w]e are sometimes afraid to open that can of worms. It seems that society teaches us not to ruffle any feathers and to play it safe.”

However, as the semester continued, candidates articulated burgeoning awareness that they have an ethical duty to act, even if it makes one feel uncomfortable:

- “I thought I was doing enough by being tolerant and accepting of those different than myself. Now, I see that tolerance does not move this society forward. I need to be active in creating an equitable world for others.”
- “I need to step outside my comfort zone to teach complex issues present in our society so that I can help create a generation of thinkers and doers that will make the world a better place for us all.”
- “[B]y not intervening we let the dominant voice and ideas of what is “normal” get louder and louder.”

Catalytic validity is one form of trustworthiness of data (Anderson, Herr, & Nihlen, 2007). Several candidates started using course concepts and experiences as a catalyst for action. They started envisioning themselves as social justice educators looking for jobs in six months. They dialogued online about which of the local elementary schools would be best suited for social justice work, noting particular schools where there was greater autonomy for teachers to design their own lessons and less micro-managing from the school administration. For instance, one candidate shared with the other cohort members in the online discussion board: “At [name of school] teachers are only required to state their essential questions and method of assessment along with a short description (like "spelling workbook" or "magnets") in the online calendar they plan things in.” She went on to say that because of the school administration’s lack of micro-managing, “It seems like it would be simple to incorporate social justice in a school that operates in this way.” Additionally, some candidates could not wait until they were employed as teachers to take action. One candidate, in her weekly reading reflection, wrote: “I am going to share this article with my Collaborating Teacher this week and ask her if she thinks we can incorporate a lesson similar to the one Barbara (Michalove, 1999) did with her class.”

One candidate went so far as to change her wedding plans as a result of her new perspective. She and her fiancé were hoping to have their honeymoon at a resort in the Caribbean, but after perusing one company’s website, she noticed that it was “geared to White heterosexual couples.” She also observed that the only people of color in the marketing materials were employees of the resorts, not patrons. Her newly formed critical media literacy led her to change her wedding plans: she made the decision “to not stay at a Sandals resort; we do not want to promote the stereotypes the company is promoting.”

Since this was our first time collectively offering a cross-course focus on social justice, our main emphasis was on social justice pedagogies inside the classroom. We did not anticipate that candidates would also take their critical perspectives out into the community, but we were pleased that they did. Many authors (e.g. Ginsburg & Linday, 1995; Ritchie, 2012; Zeichner, 2009) have made the argument that social justice education requires that teachers work collectively with others—both in school and in the community—to effect social change.

Social Justice Educators Offer Students Both a Mirror and a Window

As candidates developed their own sense of agency for social change during the semester, they also began identifying pedagogical practices for social justice that were most meaningful to them. They saw their role as social justice educators as both a mirror, building curriculum around their particular students each year, and a window, not just reflecting the perspectives and experiences of the kids in the room but also bringing in other voices and perspectives, so students could become change agents for the common good.

Social justice education as a mirror. Candidates offered various conceptions of putting children at the center of the curriculum, including culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy, making use of students’ virtual school bags, funds of knowledge, children’s assets, and the personal resources students bring to their learning. As candidates wrote in their online discussion posts: “My eyes have been opened continuously throughout this semester to the importance of utilizing the students’ knowledge in your classroom.” “Every student brings life experiences into the

classroom, good and bad. These experiences are all the students have to make connections with, so teachers need to work to encourage those connections.” Although the dominant educational discourse maintains that teachers should teach what is in curriculum standards, and if children’s prior experiences play a role, it is simply to make the formal curriculum more digestible (cf. Paris, 2012), these candidates see that ignoring children’s realities negates opportunities for learning. To illustrate, one candidate stated in her written reflection on the readings: “Whether we choose to talk about it or gloss over it as if these social issues do not exist, it does not change the fact that they are still there in the children’s minds constantly.” Another candidate made a similar point in a reflection on one of the teachers’ stories that was assigned in one of the courses: “I liked that immediately the student teacher, Dana, questioned his instruction’s relevance to the lives of his students. If he just taught to the standard, then he knew that his students would not connect with the material, and they would not grow as individuals.”

Social justice education as a window. “Being a teacher is an opportunity to open new doors for kids and teach them things that they may not hear about at home,” one candidate expressed as she considered the conservative climate surrounding our university. The idea of including multiple perspectives, particularly those that may challenge dominant hegemonic narratives about the world, was challenging at first for our candidates. While one candidate in particular seemed to hold fast to the idea that children in an all-White, affluent school do not need multiple perspectives, the rest of the cohort did see the need for children to see a variety of points of view. For example, one candidate observed in her discussion post: “We should look at multiple perspectives of different groups that are not normally represented in school curricula. We should not only talk about racism but the other ‘isms.’ We need to see perspectives from all social groups.” A different candidate made a similar point in discussing what she learned from the teachers whose stories we explored in one of the courses: “I liked that she kept questioning herself about the books, ‘Whose story is this? Whose voice is heard? Whose voice isn’t heard?’” Another candidate commented similarly concerning a teacher in an assigned video (Espinosa, 2005) whose Latina/o students did not connect their own oppression with the oppression of other people of color:

Mrs. Espinosa explained that students have a hard time connecting individual stories to the struggle of an entire group. . . . I liked that she was constantly having the students explore and explain how one story was similar to all of the others, so that they could make this connection.

As candidates developed new, more agentic identities, they started to see the necessity of a sociopolitical analysis of issues, driven by multiple perspectives. In several of their lesson plans, candidates listed specific activities to address this. One group of candidates wrote a unit plan in which they would “give the students an opportunity to use systems thinking and analyze the bigger picture surrounding the issue of ‘body image.’”

The Value and Limitations of Integration of Courses around Equity and Justice

From the midpoint of the semester onwards, we noticed candidates referring to readings, discussions, activities, or insights they had in one of their other methods courses and making connection across the four courses. However, while there were gains, our data also show

limitations and areas for improvement both in our work in the classroom and in structuring a comprehensive program devoted to teacher education for social justice.

Value of integration around social justice. Candidates frequently referred to their learning in the other methods courses. Some of these comments referred to the new critical perspective they, themselves gained. For example, one candidate noted in her reading response: “I think it is interesting that our [methods] classes are intertwined regarding critical stance and diversity.” Another candidate remarked how in the four courses, “I am questioning many of my beliefs. I am shocked that I’ve never given much thought to the different wars. I’ve always supported what the government has decided. I believe this now to be an ignorant form of patriotism.” Still another candidate mentioned how the classes supported each other: “One of the main points that I am learning from this experience is that what we learn in one class can certainly be applied to another.” A fourth candidate made reference in her discussion post to pedagogical strategies she was learning:

All of our [methods] classes are exposing us to the idea of multiple perspectives. In Math, we are asking children to solve problems in multiple ways, exploring other ways of thinking about the problem, rather than just one method. In Science, we’ve learned that students should keep their science notebooks in whatever way makes sense to them, through bulleted points, illustrations of experiments, in their own language, and any way as long as there is evidence of understanding. In Social Studies, we are learning about how history books are penned from usually one dominant perspective, and other perspectives need to be brought in through primary sources. In Reading, we see how literature is a vehicle for voicing other perspectives on any number of social issues.

Like this candidate, many synthesized their learning across courses in their own way. However, they also relied on each other to help see connections. For instance, one candidate’s online query to classmates resulted in the following response in the discussion board:

You question how to add social justice into math. I think it goes back to when we discussed talking about economic and social issues. (This category of issues included: prisons, racial profiling, death penalty, immigration, poverty, hunger, welfare, minimum/living wage, sweatshops, housing, gentrification, homeownership, war, defense budgets, military recruiting, public health: AIDS, asthma, health insurance, diabetes, smoking. Also discussed were educational issues, such as access, funding, testing, achievement gaps, and environmental issues, such as, pollution and, water resources.) There will be students in our classrooms that are dealing with these issues. By incorporating these issues into math problems we are opening all our students up to the realization that these are real issues.

Although these candidates did not have much prior experience with social justice pedagogies, they had four faculty members, critical texts with lots of teachers’ stories, and each other as a support network (see Ritchie, 2012). They also recognized the need for support and mentoring in their early years as teachers, and some candidates already made plans to join a teacher inquiry

group around critical literacy the following year. As opportunities for local political action become available, we [faculty] are sharing these with the candidates. While these candidates' experience was not part of a comprehensive teacher education program with an exclusive emphasis on social justice, these four courses provided momentary disruption in the dominant paradigm and yielded promising results.

Limitations of integration around social justice. Notwithstanding the promises and possibilities we observed, our data suggest that candidates needed more time to develop into social justice educators. They require more time to develop confidence in disrupting normative educational practices in schools and the policies made outside the classroom that undergird them. Even though certain candidates demonstrated they are ready to hit the ground running, overall what we heard from them is that they need more: professional development, time to get used to the mandated curriculum, and support once they start teaching. Candidates shared comments like the following:

- “This just reveals that I still have a lot more work to do as a critical thinker.”
- “I personally am still not 100% confident to teach all I feel is necessary, but this chapter (Lewison, Leland, & Harste, 2008) has definitely begun to give me confidence and strive to research more ways of implementing multiple perspectives into my classroom one day.”
- “I definitely want to go to as many workshops as I can. I want my students to take social action and to stand up for something that is important to them.”

While they made significant shifts in their ideas and commitments, some candidates still had a hard time differentiating their lesson plans for all students or coming up with topics that included a sociopolitical analysis from a structural or systemic perspective.

Implications

We identified several important implications for social justice teacher education. First, teacher candidates need opportunities to form a community so they may engage in real dialogue about difficult issues, not just about content matter or instructional strategies. We found that our cohort model, in which candidates take all classes together for a semester, worked well in creating a safe space for dialogue to occur. We engaged candidates in community-building activities at the beginning of the semester, believing that with a strong support network they could take more risks as the semester progressed. Teacher educators for social justice need to create venues for cross-candidate dialogue to occur, as well as dialogue with other social justice educators and those involved in political movements and other forms of activism.

Second, teacher education for social justice *requires* real examples of P-12 teachers' classroom practice. Candidates appreciated and learned the most from stories of critical teachers' practices and the challenges they faced while implementing critical pedagogies. If we are to foster agency and help candidates see themselves as critical actors disrupting the status quo, we must give them tools and powerful examples of practice to help them visualize this new identity as a social justice educator. *Rethinking Schools* (www.rethinkingschools.org), The Zinn Education Project (www.zinnedproject.org), *Teaching Tolerance* (www.tolerance.org), *Radical Teacher* (<http://radicalteacher.library.pitt.edu/ojs/index.php/radicalteacher/index>), and edited books offer

real examples of social justice education in action. There are, however, substantially fewer examples of classroom teachers in the fields of math and science education. We need to use our authorial privilege to proliferate additional teachers' stories in these content areas.

Third, our data revealed that, for the majority of candidates, this was the first time they were challenged to think critically and question the legitimacy of the official canon. Yet, this was the result of a concerted effort by four progressive faculty members who collaborated to make it happen. Teacher educators have a moral imperative to ensure that every teacher candidate has the same opportunity. Institutional support is needed to accomplish this goal. Our work would have had a greater impact if we and other instructors had more structured time to collaborate, especially at institutions like ours where there is an onerous teaching load in addition to advising, research, and service responsibilities. Our efforts could have been far more cohesive if we had more collective preparatory time to scope out experiences for our candidates in the local community, such as riding public transportation, interviewing local community members, and connecting to teacher activist groups. Course releases, a reduction in other responsibilities, graduate student assistance, and a general recognition of the urgency of this work would make more collaboration possible. In turn, this would have enabled us to develop meaningful learning experiences that candidates need to effect change in their classrooms and schools as well as local, national and international communities.

We four faculty members happened to have a background in and commitment to diversity and social justice. Yet we, and our colleagues, need further professional development in social justice pedagogy. We believe that such professional development should have a multifaceted approach that includes on-campus workshops, conferences, and structured opportunities for faculty to observe each other's teaching. Tenure and promotion committees and processes need to value social justice work and understand that professors' course evaluations may not be as strong when putting social justice at the center. Teacher educators need material resources, such as content-specific books, magazines, videos, and other pedagogical tools. Funding for field trips into the local community would help strengthen the connection between what happens in schools and what is happening in the world outside the classroom.

Furthermore, institutional support needs to go toward matching candidates with collaborating teachers who themselves practice social justice teaching. Candidates' field placements may fail to support or may even negate the social justice concepts and practices being taught in teacher education. We need to match candidates with teachers who enact social justice education, even if it means increasing the candidate-to-teacher ratio. We also need better professional development for collaborating teachers so they—and increasing numbers of their colleagues—understand the social justice lens our candidates are bringing to their classrooms. Additionally, candidates need supervisors who understand what to look for when making observations during their methods courses-related field experiences, not to mention student teaching assignments. Many social justice scholars have developed and are developing assessments geared toward social justice. Supervisors need additional or different capacity development, and observational rubrics may need to be changed. Furthermore, resources are needed to support new teachers: better induction processes, strong mentor teachers, and resources for university-school partnerships such as teacher study groups and ongoing professional development, as well as practitioner research collaborations. And, of course, these resources would ideally have a social justice focus.

Notes

- [1]. Heteronormativity is a construct that privileges heterosexuality and subjugates homosexuality.
- [2]. We would like to thank Dudgrick Bevins for his work in organizing and coding data for this project.

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**Re-framing, Re-imagining, and Re-tooling Curricula from the Grassroots:
The Chicago Grassroots Curriculum Taskforce**

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This article explores the work of the Grassroots Curriculum Taskforce (CGCT), a Chicago-based collaborative that engages in collective production of curricula that more adeptly capture the cultural, economic, and political realities of Chicago Public Schools' students. We first examine the collaborative processes CGCT undertook with parents, teachers, students, community members/activists, and educational researchers to produce their first unit, Urban Renewal or Urban Removal (URUR). The second section explores CGCT and Northeastern Illinois University's College of Education's collaborative effort to partner with practitioners, educators, students, and communities to invest in liberatory grassroots K-12 curriculum while becoming partners in its development. CGCT partnerships are firmly grounded in a framework of mutual respect for the knowledge and expertise that parents, students, teachers, and community members bring to bear on K-12 education. The final section highlights challenges encountered when engaging in grassroots efforts.

The purpose of this article is to document the work of the Chicago Grassroots Curriculum Taskforce (CGCT) as we partner with others to revolutionize the traditional educational model of classroom learning. We see developing culturally relevant curricula as critical to our personal and professional lives. In the spirit of community and collectivity, the following narrative is reflective of our combined voices as we choose not to refer to ourselves as individuals within the writing but instead focus on the processes and collaborations of CGCT as we engage in the work of developing community and curricula. At the same time, we highlight the work of individuals who have been instrumental to the development and work of CGCT. As a community-centered collaborative project, we would not be able to write about this work without acknowledging their contributions.

We begin our work with the understanding that schools and curricula have the ability to empower or disempower communities. Historically, working-class youth and youth of color have been underserved by the American educational system. At the same time, neoliberal policies arguing for the corporatization of knowledge are increasingly marginalizing these youth. We believe that if we are to counter this trend, we must create curricula with community members

that speak to local political, social, and economic conditions, while developing critical academic skills that equip youth to create change.

The processes described here are multifaceted and non-linear. Several components of our endeavor occurred simultaneously and/or idiosyncratically, though we structure this article into three consecutive sections. The first section contextualizes the need for grassroots curriculum development, as an outgrowth of larger educational reforms in Chicago and across the country. This section also identifies how CGCT operationalized these frameworks in developing our first curricular unit, *Urban Renewal or Urban Removal: A History of Chicago's Land Grabs and the Struggle for Home and Community (URUR)* (2012). The second section documents the university and community collaborations that have resulted as an outgrowth of CGCT efforts. The concluding section explores the challenges inherent in grassroots community collaboration.

The Chicago Context: Understanding the Need for CGCT

Documented extensively in the works of Lipman (2003, 2004, 2011), Saltman (2007, 2009), and Fine and Fabricant (2012), Chicago has been a hotbed for neo-liberal educational reforms, which have largely resulted in the further marginalization of low-income, working class communities of color. Rooted in the belief that free market economies provide solutions to most social, political, and economic concerns, neoliberal reforms are centered in the rights of the individual and the privatization of public services. Because these resources are (falsely) positioned as available to everyone, low-income, working class families of color are often blamed for not accessing these resources.

Through the Renaissance 2010 initiative implemented in 2004, the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) targeted up to 70 “chronically underperforming” schools for “transformation” into 100 schools distinguished as charter, contract, or performance schools. This reform was advertised in terms of CPS moving to provide “choice” and “options” in the “education marketplace” (www.cps.edu/NewSchools/Pages/ONS.aspx). Significantly, one of the consequences of this initiative was to lessen the city’s financial commitment to education through the use of partners that could use their contributions to education as tax subsidies (through the federal tax code’s provision for charitable donations).

Alongside the shift towards neo-liberal educational reforms in Chicago and around the country, we have also witnessed a push towards test-based, standards-based, textbook-based curriculum. Among other concerns with such efforts, we note how the reforms tend to financially benefit four textbook companies: McGraw Hill, Harcourt, Pearson, and Houghton-Mifflin (Bracey, 2005 in Sleeter, forthcoming). Moreover, such curricular reforms “are part of a larger set of policies designed to further empower the most advantaged segments of society,” (Sleeter, forthcoming). That is, they reinforce the tradition in textbooks to prioritize Eurocentric knowledge and experience, while marginalizing the cultures of communities of color (Delgado Bernal, 2002; Nieto, 2000; Yosso, 2005; Zinn, 1980), sometimes pathologizing youth of color (Espinoza-Herald, 2003; Flores & Murillo, 2001; MacDonald & Monkman, 2005).

The Origins of the CGCT

Recognizing the current educational context of Chicago and similar urban spaces, CGCT is working to reframe traditional models of classroom learning for low-income youth of color by infusing curriculum with content relevant to their lives. As a local clearinghouse and publisher, CGCT seeks to bring students, parents, educators, and elders to the table to compile, publish, and advocate for culturally relevant materials in Chicago's schools and universities (grades K-16).

In the spirit of long-standing educational struggles, the Chicago Grassroots Curriculum Taskforce officially formed in 2009 to address the dismal and historic patterns of irrelevant materials and mis-education (Woodson, 1933) in our classrooms. As Chicagoans who have had a range of educational experiences, we began to pose to ourselves the following questions:

- What is taught in classrooms that supports the knowledge of who we are, where we come from, and where we need to go?
- Why are we, and most young Chicagoans, oblivious to Chicago's histories of people's struggles for justice?
- Why is the majority of curriculum Eurocentric? How did it get this way?
- What can educators and others do to reverse the mis-education of millions more?

Although formally initiated in 2009, CGCT's roots were planted three years earlier in a graduate level course at Chicago State University. The participants in the course, all practicing teachers in alternative schools, agreed with the assessment that Chicagoans learn very little about Chicago – and almost no history from a critical perspective. As a result, they decided to launch the Chicago Area Curriculum Exchange (CASE) in order to begin developing Chicago-focused curricula from the perspectives of historically marginalized peoples.

After meeting for about a year, the collective dissipated, but was resurrected when a young man named Derrick Anderson expressed interest in presenting Chicago history from a grassroots perspective at the Social Justice Student Expo (a local event held at the University of Illinois at Chicago). His presentation at the Expo helped to motivate others towards meeting regularly.

Several longtime Chicagoans heeded the call, including Myrna Garcia, Nzinga Hill, and Lindsay Smith. This group presented a workshop at the 2009 Teachers for Social Justice Curriculum Fair in Chicago. The presentation was called *The Battle for Relevant Curriculum – Creating a Social Justice Course on Chicago from the Grassroots by Us!* The response by educators and community members was overwhelming. People from across the city quickly joined the effort to produce a series of curricular units. The series was called *A People's Chicago: Our Stories of Change and Struggle*, and a group of six to eight people met regularly to design a prototypical unit of study that resulted in our first curriculum unit, *URUR* (2012).

As curriculum development ensued, CGCT grew exponentially over the next two years. A resource center/office space opened in the Uptown community in the northeast side of Chicago. A Steering Committee was formed. The organization became incorporated as a 501c(3). We also began to ground our work conceptually through scholarly literature on participatory action research (Cammarota & Fine, 2008) and critical, culturally relevant, liberatory pedagogy (Freire, 1970; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Nieto, 2009). Scholarly literature utilizing a critical perspective harnessed our efforts towards the transformative pedagogy we believe is needed as working-class

communities of color are, for the most part, locked out of decision-making when it comes to the implementation of educational policies and practices (Hood & Ahmed-Ullah, 2011; Lipman 2011). Moreover, the CGCT model incorporates the work of critical pedagogues and cultural relevance theorists (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008) and puts forth a pragmatic framework to do this work “on the ground.”

These understandings enhanced our vision of what curriculum should look like, as well as the academic skills it should develop. We began to develop our own framework, calling it the Grassroots Curriculum (GC) model, which is reflective of our belief that the process of developing curriculum is just as important as the final product. The GC model illustrates the ways in which students, parents, educators, and community members can and should be involved in curriculum development. This approach is especially important in light of shifting educational reforms that increasingly narrow curriculum and further marginalize knowledge systems along the lines of class and race.

Developing the URUR

Predating CGCT, an independent taskforce came together to draft a unit of study based on extraordinary changes to Chicago’s urban landscape due to gentrification and displacement. Based on the topic’s current relevance coupled with pronounced student interest and a near total lack of such curricular resources, we chose to move forward. Grounded in a democratic process, our group immediately emphasized the need to include numerous voices and narratives. We hosted a series of open meetings to obtain input on desired and needed content and curriculum. In sum, eight taskforce committee meetings were held with the original members and three larger community forums were held with an average of 25 attendees per session. Participants, mostly as attendees of prior workshops (Teachers for Social Justice [TSJ] Curriculum Fairs, 2009 and 2010), were notified of meetings through phone-calls, emails, and text messages. These meetings and workshops provided our guiding brainstorm, content outline, essential questions, key projects, learning activities, and key threads for the unit and CGCT—all of which were organized into our unit curriculum map (*URUR*, 2012).

Of the 155+ participants involved in the previously described aspects of the process, there were approximately 50 classroom teachers from Chicago Public Schools and alternative schools, 35 youth and community organizers, 30 parents, 25 community elders, and 20 high school students. Adding the original 48 students in dialogue with the two original educators in the Chicago State course, there were over 200 participants involved in this phase of developing the original unit.

A broad range of individuals and groups also participated in the next phase of work—determining the content, learning activities, visuals, and design of the curriculum and engaging in the editing process. For example, 21 high school students from David Steiber’s Urban Studies class at Team Englewood High School (CPS) got involved. With Englewood being ground zero for Chicago’s foreclosure, disinvestment, and poverty crises, these students contributed powerful poems and short essays. In addition, CGCT distributed a Call for Contributions (via email, a newsletter, and phone call blasts) to over 2,400 people. The call attracted nearly 100 direct contributors to the books and hip-hop mix CD that together comprise the entire *URUR* set. Contributors included approximately 22 classroom educators, 20 artists, 18 displaced residents,

15 college students (undergraduate and graduate), 12 high school students, five housing activists, and four university faculty.

URUR represents our vision of an academically rigorous, cross disciplinary, culturally relevant, justice-centered curriculum. It seeks to develop key historical understandings about Chicago's major land disputes. Simultaneously, it seeks to locate CPS students' experiences within contemporary processes of gentrification.

Collaborative Efforts: Building Community and Curriculum

The CGCT has built a network of over 200 volunteers and contributors through our Calls for Submission, presentations at dozens of local classrooms and educational events, listserv outreach, and book circles (Knowledge Parties). Participation is also garnered through seven active committees, all of which contribute to the publication process. Increasing our capacity to coordinate our efforts, two part-time staff members were hired in the fall of 2012.

URUR is being piloted at two local Chicago public high schools and is being used as a university-level curricular tool at five Chicago universities. Additionally, our dissemination process includes presentations to the Chicago Teachers Union. By casting a broad net, we are working to connect with as many educational stakeholders as possible, posing an alternative to traditional research methods that often privilege research agendas of university professors. In 2012 we were invited to present at a Founders Table workshop and a plenary session at the National Association of Multicultural Education (NAME). Christine Sleeter (forthcoming) and Greg Michie (2012) have included CGCT's work in their most recent books as models of "empowering," "democratic," and "social justice" curricula.

Grassroots Knowledge Parties

Beyond distributing thousands of flyers, hanging posters, meeting with school staff, and tabling at dozens of events, we have been organizing Knowledge Parties (KPs) to enhance distribution and utilization of *URUR*. Fourteen KPs took place between late February and May of 2013. We have held KPs in people's homes, cafes, community centers, local retail establishments, and even a bar. The sharing of *URUR* with the larger community from a grassroots approach seeks to counter the corporatization and market-driven approach to the dissemination and production of knowledge, fostering access to all community members. At every KP thus far, a participant has signed up to host the next KP. Throughout the process we've been able to gather 110 names of individuals interested in CGCT, simultaneously allowing for further access and exposure of grassroots curriculum to the larger Chicago community.

Activities in University Courses

While CGCT is currently collaborating with several universities across Chicago, the relationship with Northeastern Illinois University (NEIU) is the most developed. The collaboration between CGCT and NEIU began in 2010 when one of us became involved with the Inquiry to Action Group facilitated by CGCT through the local organization, Teachers for Social Justice. This opened the opportunity to connect our work to NEIU's College of Education. The collaboration aims to bridge theory and practice by prioritizing the development of culturally relevant social justice curricula in NEIU's teacher preparation programs.

The mission and vision of CGCT aligns with the Educational Foundations course, *EDFN 305: Historical and Philosophical Foundations of Urban Education*. By becoming aware of—and perhaps involved in—CGCT activities, students come to understand why and how educators should develop local and relevant content from students’ families, cultures, histories, communities, and experiences. The initial iteration of the collaboration began with one visit from a CGCT member to EDFN 305. During this 3-hour session, CGCT members shared with pre-service teachers the ways in which their philosophy of education frames their engagement with K-12 students and curriculum development. After this presentation, the education students were asked to engage in critical praxis via a group project in which they designed lesson plans grounded in culturally relevant pedagogy.

After the first collaboration, NEIU faculty and CGCT members identified areas in need of improvement that would serve to better support and facilitate education students’ engagement and success in developing culturally relevant curriculum. An outcome of these discussions was the development of the CGCT Toolkit (<http://grassrootscurriculum.org/index.php/curriculum/curriculum-toolkit>), which provides a wide array of resources from which students can develop their own culturally relevant curriculum.

Similar to the approach used by the CGCT, faculty and students in this course collaboratively identify a theme to address via curriculum projects. For example, during one class session, a CGCT member asked education students, “What are the issues facing young people today?” Students identified a variety of issues, including: violence, poverty, lack of living wage/sustainable jobs, and marginalization. The CGCT member then posed the question, “Are schools addressing these concerns?” Students replied with resounding “NO!” This became the point of entry for students enrolled in EDFN 305 for the next 15 weeks. The presentation by CGCT compliments the foundation and framework for the course readings, assignments, discussions, and activities.

The themes students identify in the course are similar to those identified by CGCT; these include Land, Community, and Urban Geography; Education Systems, Schools, and Learning; (Im)migration and Globalization; Labor, Industry, and Capitalism; The Streets, Law, and Criminalization; Healthy Living and Health Crises; Government, Elections, and Policy; Culture, Media, and Community. Once a theme is agreed upon, students are oriented to the toolkit and receive guidance on navigating the documents and ways to use the toolkit for their own curriculum development (e.g., unit map template, projects list, local resources list).

The instructors for this course (who are also CGCT members) work together with other CGCT staff to give students feedback on their projects. This practice allows both university faculty and other CGCT members to discuss the progress of the students while considering theoretical and practical aspects that should be highlighted or incorporated to further facilitate their development and understanding of culturally relevant pedagogy and practice. Students develop websites that highlight their curriculum projects (for samples, see <http://www.grassrootscurriculum.org>). They are also asked to provide feedback on the utility and accessibility of the CGCT Toolkit. This

feedback is then discussed by faculty and other participating CGCT members, serving to further inform and shape these curricular materials.

Although the majority of the students enrolled in EDFN 305 are aspiring teachers, one CGCT member has also taught the foundations course to students in the School Counseling Program. Students in this program use the toolkit to develop a counseling program or initiative based on student needs, which they identify through research into a particular school and community in Chicago. The work with the school counselors has been eye-opening; students noted that they have never been asked to think about the community in the context of their professional work. For CGCT, this is reflective of the broader disconnect between schools, communities, and programs in higher education. Thus, working with these students has offered another opportunity to think about the importance of dialogue and collaboration across all levels of education.

Forum for University Students

Collaboration between CGCT and NEIU's College of Education also led to organizing an annual event, *Creating Grassroots Education: A Collaborative Forum for Students*. Now entering its third year, this event is organized for several audiences, including undergraduate and graduate students at NEIU taking courses in the Educational Foundations Program, Educational Leadership and Development Program, and the *Grow Your Own Teachers Program (GYO)*, as well as students interested in NEIU's College of Education. Together, these courses and programs introduce students to critical readings in education while linking them to contemporary issues facing educators today at the intersections of race, class, and gender. This event is an opportunity to connect aspiring teachers and school counselors with practicing teachers/counselors, community activists/organizations, administrators, scholars, and students across the city of Chicago who are currently engaged in anti-oppressive, liberatory (Freire, 1970), humanizing, and culturally relevant education.

A primary goal of this event is to help students experience firsthand the relevance and practical applications of social justice education by introducing them to the work of the CGCT and connecting them with individuals engaged in such work. Through this collaborative effort, future and current educators are able to see themselves as change agents and advocates for social justice. Broadening the scope of how and where students learn encourages pedagogical practices that embrace all spaces as sites of inquiry and action. Lastly, it demands that future and current educators come to value, respect, and honor the knowledge of children/youth, families, and communities.

University Collaboration: Leadership Development

More recently, CGCT and the NEIU's College of Education have implemented transformative pedagogy components in the newly state-mandated Principal Endorsement Program for graduate students in the Department of Educational Leadership and Development. Using Gary Anderson's (2009) rationale that "participatory school restructuring cannot transform the educational experiences of marginalized students unless educators' beliefs and assumptions as well as relations of power in schools and communities are challenged," (p. 130), these components require students to do class projects that assess particular components in their school institution and local community. This includes using participatory action research methods, identifying current and potential community partnerships, and assessing human resource services.

Prospective school leaders will learn how to use a culturally relevant curriculum and become familiar with an advocacy-oriented leadership style that enhances authentic relationships with key partners in school curriculum, community relations, and institutional assessment skills. CGCT and the NEIU College of Education will assess the courses at the end of the semester, with the goal of improving the use of transformative pedagogy components.

CGCT's culturally relevant curriculum methods are primarily used in three classes required for the Principal Endorsement Graduate Program: Human Relations, Educational Research Design and Data Analysis, and Community Relations. The Human Relations course focuses on team building skills with an understanding of social concerns and stress factors. Students also learn about a variety of issues that pertain to race relations, cultural identity and diversity, the corporatization of education, social-economic inequalities, gendered identities, and stress management. All topics are designed to prepare future school leaders with an understanding on how current economic, political, and social conditions have disenfranchised low-income communities of color. The Educational Research Design and Data Analysis course focuses on a semester-long participatory action research project. Students learn how to analyze empirical data and use qualitative methods to design a professional development workshop for their peers. The purpose of the project is to prepare future school leaders to use research methods to strategically address school concerns while designing culturally relevant curricula. The Community Relations course has students develop a community relations campaign addressing a specific concern identified by community members. For this, students research the history of the surrounding community of the school where they are employed. From this exercise students are required to analyze school partnerships as well as local community organizations and then determine how they can be involved in the development of culturally relevant curricula. The final project has students create a resource guide on how to assess community needs while listing resources available to community members.

All transformational pedagogy components in the three Principal Endorsement Graduate Program courses are designed to introduce prospective school leaders to the patterns of demographic changes in the city of Chicago and its surrounding suburbs. This initiative is thus in line with CGCT's mission and vision to re-tool and re-imagine traditional models of education.

Constructing Bridges and Navigating Detours

As a group comprised mostly of educators and parents, with only a few of us having some organizing and a little publishing experience, we have experienced numerous challenges in building a grassroots curriculum development and publishing organization. Here we discuss our two most formidable challenges.

As a volunteer-based publisher, CGCT faced the challenge of finding skilled people to assist when needed (e.g., graphic designers, web designers, database creators), learning how to navigate the printing world (e.g., pricing, the language of the print industry, obtaining quotes from trusted places), and effectively organizing our pool of volunteers to accomplish the dozens of tasks that arise. It is all being forged by fire, or as Myles Horton (1990) says, "We make the road by walking."

Another challenge is getting schools to purchase curriculum and use it in classrooms. With each school in Chicago having autonomy over its curriculum choices, we need to build relations with schools one by one. Teachers are extremely busy—principals are even busier. Schools have limited budgets and the Chicago Public Schools budget is being cut continuously. We meet with teachers who reach out to us upon learning about CGCT’s work. These meetings usually occur during the teacher’s preparation period, after which they must take time to review the materials, find connections with their courses, discuss our work at the department level, and negotiate with their school leadership to purchase the CGCT materials. Without adequate but unimposing follow-ups, CGCT curriculum can quickly become an afterthought.

We are currently engaged in building meaningful curriculum relations with teachers from over 18 schools. Teacher interest is high, but budgets and principal approval may pose a challenge. Because we lack the resources of a large publishing house (e.g., sales reps, promotions, tech-savvy support), we must sacrifice tremendous amounts of time to get into schools and build bridges that support grassroots curriculum. In both cases, a larger staff of highly skilled people would be advantageous, especially when it comes to conducting mass outreach and school-based relationship building in a city as large as Chicago.

Our commitment to inclusive, grassroots curriculum transformation continues to develop and evolve. As a collective, we believe that it is impossible to enact real, sustained change without the efforts and voices of all community members. CGCT will continue to facilitate collaborative processes among educators, parents, students, community members, and higher education faculty in order to create, sustain, and expand spaces for the continued development and dissemination of tangible, justice-centered, grassroots products that reflect our commitment to re-frame, re-imagine, and re-tool curricula from the grassroots.

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Education Community Dialogue towards Building a Policy Agenda for Adult Education: Reflections Drawn from Experience

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In this article, we share the experience of the “Amplifying Voices” initiative. Held by the Latin American Campaign for the Right to Education (CLADE) within the scope of public policy advocacy, “Amplifying Voices” applies the principles of consultation and dialogue in youth and adult education communities, aiming at a stronger connection between expectations and decision making processes with regards to adult education policies. Over the past two years, this initiative has promoted listening and attentive dialogue in order to strengthen participation and affirm the importance of actors’ voices in shaping policy and promoting social change.

“It is not in silence that [people] make themselves, rather it is in their words, their work, their action-reflection.” (Paulo Freire, 1980, p. 78)

In this article, we share some thoughts on the Latin American Campaign for the Right to Education’s (CLADE) experience with consultation and dialogue in education communities, within the scope of public policy advocacy. We focus on the case of the “Amplifying Voices” initiative, which aims to provide an open space for critical thinking and dialogue for youth and adult education actors, towards shaping education policy and promoting social change.

CLADE is a plural network of civil society organizations acting in the defense and promotion of the right to free public education for all as a responsibility of the State, regarding the dimensions of availability, accessibility, acceptability, adaptability, and accountability. Such commitment implies recognizing education as a fundamental human right and an enabling right that allows for the realization of all other rights. As articulated by Katarina Tomasevski (2005), the right to education includes the following dimensions:

- a) *Availability*: functioning educational institutions and programmes have to be available in sufficient quantity within the jurisdiction of the State;
- b) *Accessibility*: educational institutions and programmes have to be accessible, physically

and economically, to everyone, without discrimination, within the jurisdiction of the State;

- c) *Acceptability*: the form and substance of education, including curricula and *teaching methods*, have to be acceptable (e.g., relevant, culturally appropriate, and of good quality) to students and, in appropriate cases, parents; and
- d) *Adaptability*: education has to be flexible so it can adapt to the needs of changing societies and communities and respond to the needs of students within their diverse social and cultural settings.

For those involved in the Campaign, the unconditional defense of the human right to education goes hand in hand with efforts for greater participation at all levels of education policy: from its design to the monitoring of its implementation and evaluation. Thus, one of the core premises of the Campaign is “promoting pluralistic and collective action among the diverse members of civil society in the fight for ensuring the right to a public and free education for all” (CLADE, 2010). The Campaign seeks to involve “boys, girls and youth, adults, non-governmental organizations, teachers unions, education workers’ associations and social movements” (CLADE, 2010). According to this perspective, all citizens should have their voices heard and that means that their participation is crucial to relevant political and decision-making processes.

Regarding education policy, it is crucial that the right of members of the education community—including students, teachers and other education professionals, parents and civil society groups—to participate in public debates be promoted and respected. This means that they should be recognized as the main actors to be consulted and considered during debates on public education policies and also that their perceptions and desires for an education that is meaningful to them should be the basis for collective action towards developing a public education policy agenda. Díaz (n.d.) quotes Boaventura de Sousa Santos as saying:

The idea of democracy must be understood as something much broader than that which exists under the capitalist system, in that democracy is in fact the entire process through which we transform unequal relations of power into relations based on shared authority. This is important within the family, as it is in the factory, on the street, in the community, in the public space and within relations between countries. As such, additional structural spaces that go well beyond conventional political spaces must be established, thereby radicalizing democracy and making it possible to consolidate the principles of shared authority as a political objective. (p. 2)

Nevertheless and contradictorily, the voices of those actors directly impacted by education policies are the very ones that are least audible in the processes for developing an agenda for public education. At least in Latin America and the Caribbean, recent protests demanding free public education for all, as well as other rights, clearly reveal the lack of truly participatory spaces in which citizens can convey their thoughts and make recommendations regarding policies and measures that aim to improve education. Ordinary people are rarely asked about the kind of education they desire, what knowledge is meaningful to them, or how they evaluate the education that is currently being offered.

A second premise is that participation leads to critical reflection, generating an opportunity to think about one's rights and, in turn, offering the potential for transformational action. Dialogue is therefore seen as a moment of self-awareness and realization. According to Freire (1980):

Conscientization cannot exist outside of a “praxis,” or better yet, without the act of action-reflection . . . For this very reason, conscientization is an historical commitment. It also means historical conscience: it means critical insertion into history, and that [people] must take on their role as actors who build and rebuild the world. . . . Conscientization does not seek a separation where the conscience is on one side and the world on the other. Rather, it is based on a conscience-world relation. In turn, the false conscience, i.e., the state of semi-intransitive or naïve transitive conscience, is overcome, enabling a better critical insertion of conscientized persons in a reality that is demystified. (p. 26)

A third premise for these initiatives is that research-action is valuable activity (Freire, 1980). That is, we believe that the exercise of listening and dialogue contributes to the collective building of knowledge, unlike more traditional forms of research.

Finally, the fourth premise is that this exercise can be a way to document and give visibility to concrete cases that often remain invisible in the media, as well as in official statistics and documents. We agree with Tomasevski (2005), that the fight for making human rights a reality should not be guided by statistical data alone, but rather by concrete cases and stories. Rights violations become more real and significant when cases are documented at the source, also providing input into the design of strategies for combating such violations. Taking these four premises as a starting point, we now look closer at the experience of “Amplifying Voices.”

Youth and Adults: You Have the Word

“Amplifying Voices: Views and proposals for youth and adult education from the perspective of its subjects” was conceived as an initiative based on the recognition that all people are rights-bearers and should be heard and participate in decision-making processes, particularly those addressing policies and practices that affect them. The focus on the public sector was highly emphasized, due to a Campaign priority to advocate for public education at all levels, what is considered a sine qua non to the realization of education as a human right. As such, the name, “Amplifying Voices,” mirrors the initiative's main objective: to enable the expectations, demands, and public policy recommendations of those who study or have studied in youth and adult education classes to be known and taken into account by public policy makers and by society as a whole.

The expression “youth and adult education” (Y&AE, or EPJA in Portuguese and Spanish) refers to a level of education aimed at illiterate young people and adults, as well as those who could not complete their basic education. In Latin America and the Caribbean the concept of youth and adult education has been reinforced by educators, theoreticians, and activists who follow the path opened by Paulo Freire, as a way to promote students' empowerment through their self-recognition as rights bearers and key actors in the political and other decision-making processes that affect their lives.

Another factor that contributed significantly to EPJA practices in the region is the influence of the region's popular education tradition, which assumes that some ethical, political, and pedagogical approaches are essential within the framework of a politically emancipatory project. From this point of view, one prioritizes the participation of vulnerable sectors that otherwise might be excluded from educational processes. In its pedagogical dimension, popular education is about cultivating self-awareness of one's knowledge and power to develop one's thoughts on reality, taking everyday experience as the beginning of educational process. Additionally, popular education encourages people to *rebuild the world* (Freire, 1980) or take action to promote social change.

It is worth noting that such an understanding of EPJA springs mostly from the educational experience in itself. For this reason, EPJA remains a key issue in the Latin America and the Caribbean region, due to the lack of public policies and resources that effectively contribute to the realization of this right. In 2011 more than 48 million people in Latin American and the Caribbean were illiterate, or 8.4% of the region's population (United Nations Children's Fund, 2013). Most are female rural workers, indigenous persons, and people of African descent, which calls for urgent measures focusing on these groups.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, there are between 40 and 50 million indigenous persons and more than 150 million of African descent; according to SITEAL (2011), these two groups are disproportionately among the poorest and most marginalized people in the region. They tend to have the most precarious jobs and less access to a relevant quality education, and are often excluded from decision-making processes. Depending on the country, the percentage of adult indigenous individuals who are illiterate or have limited literacy varies from 60% to 90% of the population (SITEAL, 2011). It is also worth noting that in most countries in the region illiteracy is higher among African descendants who live in rural areas than those who live in urban areas. Among indigenous and African descendants, women are the most marginalized in terms of accessing and completing formal education.

“Amplifying Voices”: Conception and Challenges

The “Amplifying Voices” initiative structures itself around a website where EPJA students and teachers from Latin America and the Caribbean can post their stories in video, audio or written form, and also find stories from students and teachers in their own and other countries (see <http://www.campanaderechoeducacion.org/vocesepja>). Actually, when “Amplifying Voices” began in 2011, CLADE staff made an effort to map similar initiatives, identifying EPJA experiences being carried on in different places and by different actors. This step was critical because such experiences had limited visibility on the Internet and therefore were not being used for cross-regional analysis of EPJA practices and policies.[1]

Among the experiences that were visible on the Internet, the majority placed emphasis on the success of certain literacy training models and not on the EPJA students' and teachers' voices. While the goal of allowing EPJA students to have their voices heard at a regional and a global level was a step towards their empowerment and the possibility of impacting public EPJA policies, the choice of collecting and presenting such stories through an Internet site also reflected a commitment to promote regional exchanges of knowledge and personal experiences.

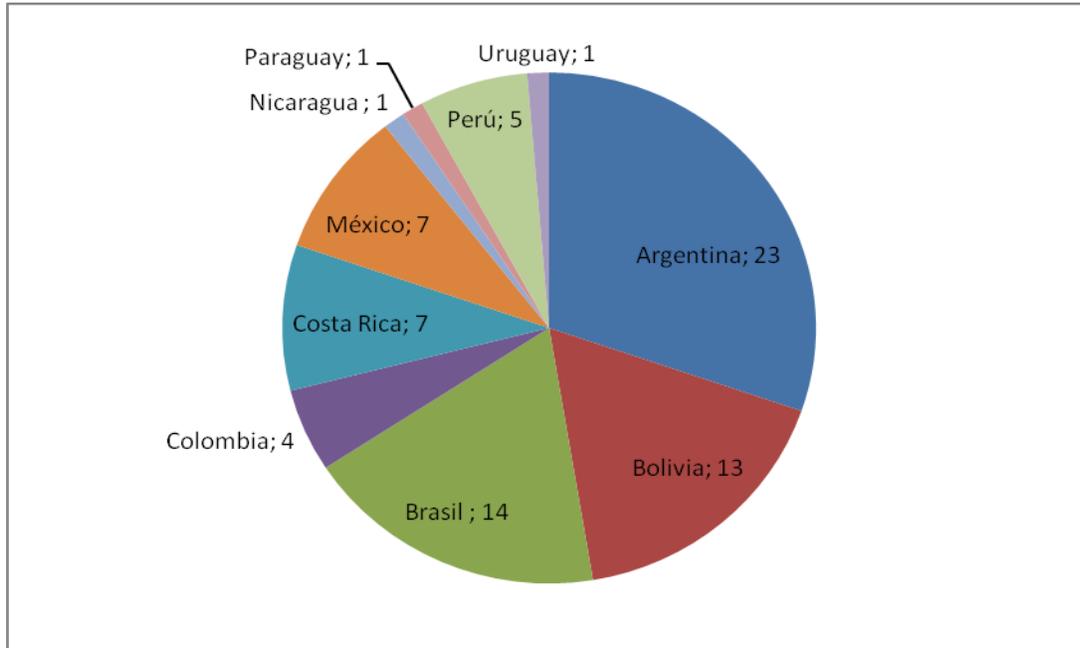
“Amplifying Voices” departed from recognition of the web as a fundamental tool for the political advocacy activities that were already being carried out by CLADE at that time. That is, due to the fact that CLADE is a decentralized campaign that includes national members in 15 countries, as well as international partners, the use of technology has been an essential tool for political mobilization, especially because it brings the concept of political advocacy to a different level, adding to the participation of Campaign members in face-to-face meetings and events.

Similarly, in spite of its Internet-based dimension, “Amplifying Voices” also included efforts to combine distance and face-to-face approaches. The challenge was how to foster engagement of EPJA students from a wide range of contexts, including those who might not be acquainted with or have frequent access to the Internet. This necessitated converting this website into an important tool to promote exchange and raise voices, individually and collectively. The answer for CLADE was to invite teachers, in addition to students, to become involved. This decision proved valuable because the teachers became responsible for collecting their students’ stories and delivering them to CLADE staff. At the same time, this strategy encouraged teachers to involve their students in reflexive processes. This included promoting students’ reflection on the very issues that were important to “Amplifying Voices,” opening the possibility of drawing recommendations concerning EPJA policies for these students.

It is important to highlight that in addition to teachers and students, there was also a crucial engagement from members of civil society organizations in the implementation of this initiative. “Amplifying Voices” was able to involve different facilitators who either helped CLADE staff reach out to teachers and students or uploaded the video, audio, and written testimonies to the website.

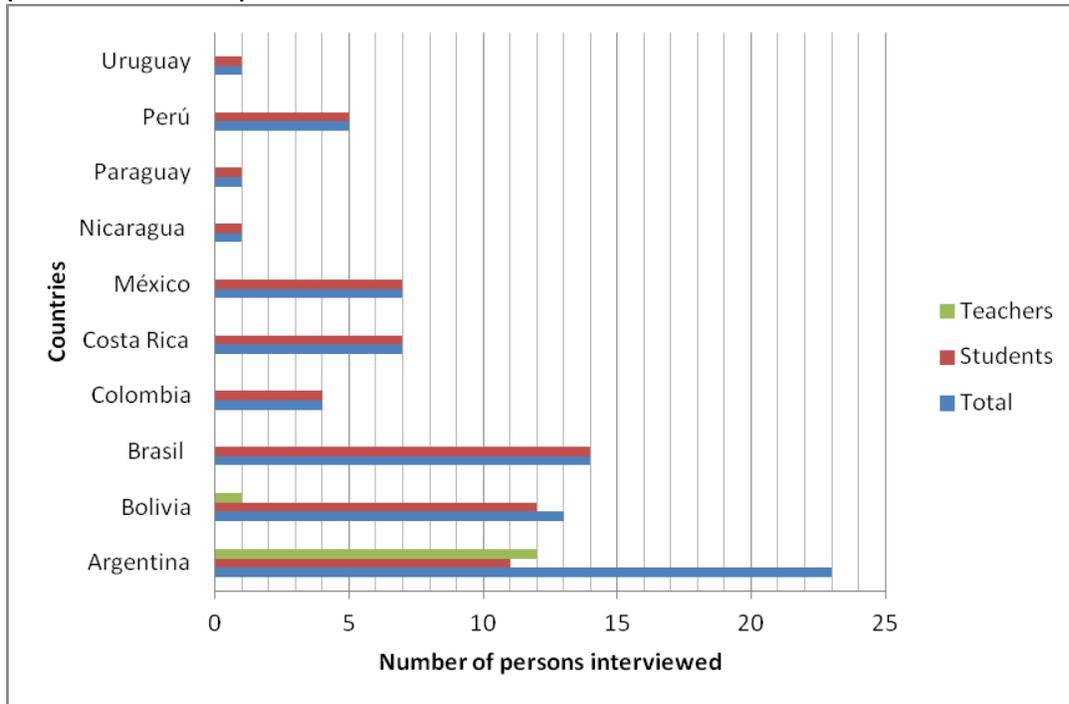
This is, of course, a very challenging initiative, which is still (and gradually) being implemented. Thanks to all these concentrated efforts, the website currently represents the opinions of 76 persons (13 teachers and 63 students) from Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Peru, Paraguay, and Uruguay. The “Amplifying Voices” website (<http://www.campanaderechoeducacion.org/vocesepja>) receives 1,500 visitors per month on average.

Table 1: Number of persons who left their testimonies on the “Amplifying Voices” website by country



Source: Latin American Campaign for the Right to Education

Table 2: Number of persons interviewed for the “Amplifying Voices” website, by country, by group (students or teachers)



Source: Latin American Campaign for the Right to Education

In addition to giving visibility to these messages through the on-line platform, CLADE has worked to communicate these actors' demands and recommendations in different political advocacy spaces in which it participates. The Campaign actively takes part in regional and international meetings and conferences that provide unique opportunities to dialogue with heads of State and other representatives of various government bodies, as well as key actors from multilateral organizations and other stakeholders. These events are invaluable opportunities for political advocacy, allowing recommendations from civil society to be presented to public authorities.

To illustrate, CLADE was present at the 21st Ibero-American Congress of Education, which was organized by The Ibero-American States Organization (OEI is its acronym in Spanish) in September 2011. This Congress was attended by all ministers of education from Latin America and the Caribbean, plus Portugal and Spain. The Congress was also important because it was followed by the Ibero-American Congress of Permanent, Technical and Professional Education, attended by more than 5,000 teachers, mostly from the EPJA sector. At the September Congress CLADE presented to the ministers the recommendations received through the "Amplifying Voices" website to that date (see <http://www.campanaderechoeducacion.org/vocesepja/propuestas>). An interactive exhibition was set up to show the videos and resources from the "Amplifying Voices" site.[2]

A Closer Snapshot of "Amplifying Voices" Recommendations

From CLADE's perspective, policies and programs for EPJA must be in line with the expectations of EPJA students. This understanding guided the interviews aimed at finding out these students' expectations, views, and recommendations for education policies and practices.[3] These interviews were semi-structured around two guiding questions. *What are your expectations about education? What obstacles did you find in your way to receive education?*

The excerpts below highlight the main issues that emerged from an analysis of the interview data. Each interviewee decided how he/she wanted his/her name, age, and location to be revealed. Each excerpt concludes with a link to the internet page where the full testimony can be found.

Four main issues were identified by the interview data analysis: a) experiencing new forms of interaction through written culture; b) increasing one's knowledge and/or self-confidence; c) realizing rights of citizenship and increasing the feeling of belonging to society; and d) being able to work and recovering one's dignity. The excerpts also allowed for identification of the issues of accessibility, relevance, and discrimination as crucial to realizing the human right to education, according to the framework elaborated by Tomasevsky (2004).

Experiencing New Forms of Interaction through Written Culture

This theme refers specifically to students who took part in activities that enhanced their literacy skills. Most of these testimonies mention daily experiences wherein the student was negatively affected by the fact that he/she did not know how to read and write, which resulted in

experiences of exclusion and discrimination. As an illustration, Balvina, an indigenous woman from Peru, comments:

My father wouldn't send me to school. In the past parents wouldn't send us to school. . . . Our parents would say: "to send letters to men, that is why I will send you?" My siblings have not gone to school either, but the boys studied by themselves. My father never allowed me to study . . . I could not sign papers in my community's assemblies. . . . Now I'm learning how to write, so I can sign, so I will not be afraid anymore . . . I will not falter anymore or hide behind other people. Now, I can sign at the assemblies, for I have learned. . . . Come to school, women! I'm learning, and we all will learn, so that we are not left behind. I want my children to know that this is their right, my right, the right of everybody to go to school. If they want to learn, they won't feel ashamed anymore for not knowing it. They will write whenever they need, without asking anyone for help as I did in the past. . . . And my children know it as well. I want all of them to complete school. So, I will remain as the only one who was illiterate." (Retrieved from <http://www.campanaderechoeducacion.org/vocesepja/2011/asi-ya-no-tendre-miedo/>)

Increasing Knowledge and Self-Confidence

Interviewees indicated that they increased their interest in knowledge as they realized their right to education. In turn, the experience enhanced their sense of autonomy and self-confidence in social relationships, for example, within the family context. María Marina, an 84-year-old Mexican woman, exemplifies this theme:

I came back to study in order to move forward and learn, 'cause I couldn't do so when I was a child. My parents didn't send me to school. Now, I am given the option to go on with my studies. . . . The major difficulty I faced was to reconcile studying with being a housewife—and my husband didn't like it. But I wanted to study. . . . I recommend that we continue our studies even after we become adults. It is a very important thing to do . . . especially if you didn't have the chance to do so when you were young. (Retrieved from <http://www.campanaderechoeducacion.org/vocesepja/2011/maria-marina-volvi-a-estudiar-para-seguir-adelante/>)

Realizing Rights of Citizenship and Increasing the Feeling of Belonging to Society

Here responses referred not just to having access to written culture but also to the possibility of being able to exercise one's citizenship rights and increase one's participation in democracy. Interviewees also mentioned their desire to learn new things and participate in everyday life decisions and/or perform everyday tasks in equal conditions with other people, without feeling inferior. For instance, Julia Aparicio de Sánchez, a 53-year-old field worker and housewife from El Cónдор, Bolivia, explained:

Now I'm 53 years old, but I feel strong, this is why I continue to work. I'm from the countryside and I am the mother of 12 children. Before learning how to read and write I was like a blind person. I would see signs and papers everywhere in the

city, but I did not know what they were all about. I could not sign my own name. . . . But I had the chance to learn how to read and write, and math, and thanks to that I can now decide where to go when I'm in the city, and I can read the letters sent by my children, and also attend other qualification workshops. I demand [public authorities] the implementation of projects to improve my community. Now I can count money faster whenever I sell or shop [for] something. I don't have to press my fingerprint anymore; I can sign my name now. I can control my home expenses better. I can enter any place with more confidence and without asking so many questions, because I can read. Now I can find out where offices and shops are. I also see life with different eyes, as if a blindfold was taken off my face. . . . Finally, I say that I want to go on and tell other women to qualify themselves as well. They must learn, and so they can claim for their rights too. (Retrieved from <http://www.campanaderechoeducacion.org/vocesepja/2011/asi-podremos-reclamar-nuestros-derechos/>)

Being Able to Work and Recovering One's Dignity

In this theme interviewees emphasized the relation between education and work opportunities. Being able to find a job, with better labor conditions, meant that they and their families could regain dignity. For example, Marivaldo Rodrigues de Souza, a 43-year-old janitor living in São Paulo, Brazil, reported:

I had a hard life. I was not raised by my parents. I've always worked for others, in the fields. I'm from the State of Bahia. I came to São Paulo two years ago. Because I've never gone to school, I was hired by a third-party cleaning company, but the salary is not good, and then I decided to quit and go to school. . . . I started studying so I could receive some training to work at least as doorkeeper, so I can provide my family with a better life. I have a very good teacher. A teacher who knows how to educate; she can explain the subject. . . . In Bahia, I would not have the chance to study, because the school was in the city, which was far away, and there was no public transport. Then I took all this time to go to school. Now, when I got here, I found this opportunity. . . . I think that whoever quits school should return, because school is everything in life. (Retrieved from <http://www.campanaderechoeducacion.org/vocesepja/2011/marivaldo-a-escola-e-tudo-para-mim/>)

We identified three themes (accessibility, relevance, and discrimination) that arose in interviewees' responses to our second guiding question: *What obstacles did you find in your way to receive education?* We present excerpts from some of the EPJA students' testimonies given during the interviews that illustrate these themes.

Accessibility

Jessica Carolina Morales, a 23-year-old student from Colombia, began by highlighting obstacles related to accessibility. She mentioned as barriers the distance required to reach school combined with the lack of transportation, as well as the fees that are charged:

I like to study very much. And I believe it is good for me, so I will be someone in life. I want to continue with my studies, I want to go to school to become a teacher and help children. . . . One difficulty is that my feet hurt; it is difficult to walk. My knees hurt as well [and it was aggravated because I had to walk long distances to go to school]. . . . Another complicated issue is money. They charged us fees for the painting of the classroom and even to enter the lab. . . . I would recommend that they give opportunity to people like me, so that we can go to school without paying such an expensive price, 'cause some people are sick and also don't have money. (Retrieved from <http://www.campanaderechoeducacion.org/vocesepja/2011/jessica-no-habia-comida-en-la-escuela/>)

Relevance

Some/many/all of the students interviewed pointed to the fact that academic content was not relevant to their daily reality and some/many/all mentioned the cultural dimension of language as a barrier, or at least a factor, discouraging participation in some EPJA programs. For instance, language was mentioned as a barrier by Ana Bertha Rojas Salvatierra, an indigenous woman from Peru.

I'm the oldest of 7 siblings, and my native language is Quechua. I was admitted to school at the age of 9. I had to walk about one hour and a half from my community to school. . . . I'd study from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., and I was one of a few women who attended school. Most of the other students were men, and they would mock me. . . . From 1st to 6th grade of primary school, the only thing I learned was: "Tito up the donkey." They wouldn't teach us math, and so I couldn't add or take away or even read. . . . Another difficulty was my native language. I could not understand advanced Spanish classes. (Retrieved from <http://www.campanaderechoeducacion.org/vocesepja/2011/alicia-las-mujeres-son-discriminadas-especialmente-las-mujeres-andinas/>)

Discrimination

In the majority of interviews students mentioned discrimination—especially gender discrimination—as a huge obstacle (see previous quotes by Julia, Balvina, and María Marina). Cristina Barreto Choque, Secretary of Bolivia Women's Confederation, also mentioned gender discrimination as undermining women's right to education; it is worth noting the value of the interviewee's mention of her country's Constitution and how her comments reinforce and reflect that focus of several human rights instruments:

In terms of education, women have big responsibilities. . . . We still see, in the Bolivian education system, that our country is far behind schedule in which regards [*sic*] women. We're fighting the fight of our ancestors. In the past, here in our communities, for instance, the role of women was to serve as housewives, taking care of their husbands, and feeding the cattle. Only men had the right to education. Today, in our country, in particular in the fields, there are women and young girls using computers. That's why we demand education for all. . . . I believe that first of all we must have self-confidence as women, and acknowledge

our rights. In the past, they said men had rights, not women, but today we realize that this is not true. They both have their rights. We have the right to education and everything else provided by the Federal Constitution. (Retrieved from <http://www.campanaderechoeducacion.org/vocesepja/2011/cristina-nuestro-pais-esta-muy-retrasado-para-las-mujeres/>)

Conclusion

Based on the above-quoted and all the other testimonies, CLADE has created a set of recommendations related to education policies and practices, and has used various fora and channels to communicate these recommendations to government officials and other stakeholders.

In summary, EPJA students demand that States:

- treat education as a right, reinforcing its connection with other human rights;
- provide free education, i.e., without cost to those participating;
- turn lifelong education into a reality;
- approve and implement policies that treat EPJA as a priority;
- adopt measures towards the end of discrimination in education, particularly with respect to gender, age, and indigenous groups;
- take into account linguistic diversity in the design and implementation of education policies; and
- organize school times to facilitate the attendance of students who also work.

“Amplifying Voices” is a recent initiative that CLADE intends to make permanent. From CLADE’s perspective, the initiative validates our central premise regarding the importance of dialogue in the process of the “conscientization” (Freire, 1980, p. 26) of political-social actors—in the strengthening of democracies and in exercising human rights. This initiative fosters actors’ reflections on the concrete impacts of education on their lives, entailing and/or facilitating political action as a main purpose. “Amplifying Voices” brought about examples of consciousness-raising processes involving the affirmation of rights, the recognition of individuals as rights-bearers, and the self-awareness of the EPJA students as legitimate political actors.

In the context of new decentralized and horizontal political practices (Díaz, n.d.) those of us involved in CLADE recognize the importance of human agency in promoting change. By encouraging people to voice their experiences and recommendations for changes in policies and practice, the “Amplifying Voices” initiative seeks to increase self-awareness about individual rights, as well as to connect people so that their aspirations can be pursued at the group, community, national, and international levels. In that sense, the experience of “Amplifying Voices” may lead to social transformations—including moves toward fuller realization of education and other human rights and progress toward achieving more just and egalitarian societies (Fraser, 2007) in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Notes

- [1]. Some existing programs aimed at promoting students’ voices on the web would not contemplate either a Latin America and Caribbean regional approach or an EPJA approach.

- [2]. A similar exhibition was set up during the VIII Assembly of the International Council on Adult Education, held from June 14-18, 2011, in Malmö, Sweden. For further information, see <http://www.icae2.org/>.
- [3]. Interviews were organized within the following context: (a) interviewees were selected based on recommendations from members of civil society organizations that work directly with EPJA (mostly members of CLADE), identified during field visits by CLADE staff to schools or EPJA centres, or self-selected after spontaneous access to the “Amplifying Voices” website; (b) interviews were conducted face-to-face by CLADE staff or representatives of civil society organizations that work directly with EPJA (most were members of CLADE), or interviews were self-initiated and uploaded by visitors to the website—either way, interviewees followed instructions that included a script of questions (see <http://www.campanaderechoeducacion.org/vocesepja/participe/>); (c) the interviews are part of a continuous process, so they have been conducted at different times; and (d) the analysis and transcription of the interview data has been done by CLADE staff.

This article was written collaboratively; the authors work in the Executive Coordination Office of the Latin American Campaign for the Right to Education (CLADE).

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Chilean Student Movements: Sustained Struggle to Transform a Market-oriented Educational System

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During the last decade, Chilean society was shaken by sharply critical and powerful student movements: secondary students led the 2006 “Penguin Revolution” and university students led the 2011 “Chilean Winter.” This article describes and analyzes these student movements to illustrate how students can be highly relevant political actors in the educational debate. First, we explain the main features of the Chilean educational system, including its extreme degree of marketization, which provided the institutional context of the movements. Next, we analyze the key components and characteristics of the 2006 and 2011 student movements to describe basic features of the two movements and identify common elements of these movements, especially from an education policy perspective. We mainly focus on the link between students’ demands and discourses and the market-oriented institutions that prevail in Chilean education. Finally, we identify students’ impact on educational debates in Chile and examine general implications for policy-making processes in the educational arena.

Introduction: Youth Apathy to Activism

One of the most important changes in the Chilean political system in recent decades was the establishment of automatic registration and voluntary voting in 2012. A political objective of this project was to increase youth participation in elections, which has been low since democracy was restored in 1990. Indeed, the lack of political participation in elections among youth was explained during the 1990s as an expression of general apathetic behavior. These young people were considered “the ‘whatever’ generation” (*La generación “No estoy ni ahí”*) due to their supposed apolitical attitudes and limited motivation to be involved in public affairs (Muñoz Tamayo, 2011; Moulián, 2002). Despite this distance from electoral and partisan politics, there is evidence that Chilean youth have profound criticisms of society (Duarte Quapper, 2000) and a high level of interest in public and social problems, especially those related to inequity and arbitrary discrimination issues (Schulz et al., 2010).

This characterization of apathy among youth may have contributed to the deliberate process of de-politicization and demobilization that started during the first democratic administration after Augusto Pinochet’s dictatorship (De la Maza, 2010). In fact, since 1990, citizen mobilizations had scarcely accompanied the democratization process in Chile. This situation began changing in 2006, with youth, specifically students, playing a crucial role as protagonists of massive demonstrations. Although students represent only a part of youth movements, social movements related to education have historically had a powerful impact on political and socio-cultural structures (Gill & DeFronzo, 2009).

Education has been the major field where Chilean youth expressed their malaise. During the last decade and especially over the past seven years, Chilean society has been shaken by two sharply critical and powerful student movements. Students' demands, which have been echoed in civil society and the political field, have questioned some of the Chilean educational system's structural elements. Since Chilean education improved some basic indicators of coverage and outcomes during the last decade, one might wonder why student protests have been so intensive and sustained during the same period. We analyze this issue, linking students' demands with the institutional features of the educational system, which was restructured by a comprehensive neoliberal reform in 1980.

In the first of the students' movements, in 2006, secondary students were in the streets for more than two months with massive marches and protests (Domedel & Peña y Lillo, 2008). This was called the "Penguin Revolution" because of the black and white uniforms worn by high school students. They struggled against the neoliberal character of the Chilean educational system, attracted strong political attention and paved the path for the next big movement led by university students beginning in 2011. The *New York Times* called this second movement the "Chilean Winter" because it occurred around the same time as the "Arab Spring" revolutions against some regimes in the Middle East (Barrionuevo, 2011). For seven months during 2011, university and secondary students shook the country with a movement that democratic administrations had not seen for more than 20 years. Strong popular support, charismatic leaders, and a powerful critique of educational inequalities were some of the characteristics of this movement.

In this article, we describe and analyze these student movements in order to illustrate how students can be highly relevant political actors in educational debates. First, we explain the main features of the Chilean educational system, including its extreme degree of marketization, which provided the institutional context of the movements. Next, we analyze the key components and characteristics of the 2006 and 2011 student movements: we describe basic features of the two movements separately and then identify key common elements of these movements, especially from an education policy perspective. Thus, we mainly focus on the link between students' demands and discourses and the market-oriented institutions that prevail in Chilean education. Finally, in order to evaluate the efficacy of the students' movements in the educational policy arena, we identify their impact on Chilean educational debates and examine some general implications for policy-making processes. Since the students' movement is an ongoing process, we emphasize the provisional character of this last section.

The Context: Chile's Market-oriented Educational System

Chilean education in general—and specifically secondary education—has frequently been presented and is seen by many as an exemplary case within the Latin American context. This image, which certainly has deep historical roots, has rested in the past decades on diverse aspects emphasized by international organizations and policy makers. In this way, Chile has occupied an important role in debates on educational policies and comparative analysis, since it initiated institutional reforms in the 1980s. These reforms included administrative decentralization, funding per capita, public support to private schools, the implementation of universal academic

achievement tests, and evaluation systems and monetary incentives for teachers. Since the mid-1990s Chile has also been very active in implementing innovative, large-scale policies on educational improvement, including the introduction of computer technology, increased school hours, curricular reform, and diverse forms of teacher education (OECD, 2004; Cox, 2003). Moreover, during the last two decades, both secondary and post-secondary education levels have rapidly increased their coverage, and 15-year-old Chilean students significantly improved their performance on reading skills tests between 2000 and 2009 (OECD, 2011).

Thus, at first glance, one may wonder why Chilean students protested so vigorously. In our opinion, the key to understanding what triggered student protests is to observe the way in which Chilean education has been organized as a market-oriented educational system, and the consequences of that institutional arrangement. Although there is no single version of what constitutes organizing the educational system as a market, reviewing the academic and educational policy literature we can identify three key elements: school choice, competition among schools, and privatization of education (Friedman, 1955; Chubb & Moe, 1990; Howell & Peterson, 2006). From a market-framed perspective, schools should compete for families' preferences and families should have the freedom to choose a school for their children. Ideally, families should be aware of the "quality" of the different options and use such information when making their choices, in this way rewarding the best schools and forcing the worst ones to either improve or leave the market. Finally, schools need to be able to distinguish their offerings and accommodate families' preferences; in order to do that, schools should enjoy high flexibility (i.e., few government regulations) in the dimensions of curriculum and management. Market proponents encourage the expansion of private schools precisely because they expect private schools will be able to react more productively to market pressures, thereby improving both quality and efficiency in education.

Market proponents also think public schools should be radically restructured to be competitive, giving school administrators the freedom to manage schools in a business-like manner. In the educational policy arena, market-oriented reformers also promote *vouchers* as the public funding mechanism of schools. In their view, parents should be free to use the vouchers in the schools where they prefer to educate their children; by operating in this way, educational vouchers simultaneously promote parental choice, competition among schools, and privatization of school (for reviews of empirical evidence of these proposals see Ladd, 2003; Levin & Belfield, 2006; Witte, 2009). Although these ideas have been intensively discussed by educational experts and policy makers around the world for many years, they have been implemented only in highly restricted ways in a few countries. From a comparative perspective, Chile is one of the countries where market-oriented reforms in education were implemented more drastically.

In Chile, since the early 1980s, the driving force for the expansion of K-12 and post-secondary education was left to supply and demand dynamics in a market-oriented fashion: minimum requirements were set for the creation of new institutions and for receiving public funding; public and private institutions had to compete for families' preferences; and a universal voucher system (a state subsidy paid according to the student's monthly attendance) was established for funding private and public schools on equal terms. Also, in order to produce local market competition, public school administration was transferred from the national Ministry of

Education to local municipalities. Since then, from the Ministry of Education's perspective, there has thus been no difference between a public and a private subsidized school.

Although some relevant changes were introduced during the post-dictatorship period, the structural elements of the marketized system have been deepened, rather than modified. For instance, in 1993, a family fee-charging mechanism was designed, creating what is called "shared funding," a co-payment system that allowed (and encouraged) private schools and secondary public schools to charge a tuition fee without losing access to the state subsidy. As a consequence, secondary education in Chile is compulsory but not free of charge, and subsidized private primary schools also charge tuition fees to families. Additionally, *vouchers* continue to be the fundamental mechanism for financing schools; the amount has steadily increased. In 2008 an additional voucher was created to target the poorest 30% of students, making them more attractive for private sector institutions. Both the co-payment system and the additional voucher for the poorest students were seen by Chilean policy makers as policy instruments to enhance market dynamics within the educational field.

As mentioned, a key criterion that oriented Chilean educational policies and regulations throughout this period was the establishment of "equal treatment" by the state of both for-profit and not-for-profit academic institutions. This meant that private schools had access to the same public resources, including funds for supplies, equipment, and infrastructure development (Bellei, González, & Valenzuela, 2010).

Market-oriented reforms in Chilean primary and secondary education have been evaluated in terms of their effects on both equity and quality. Although the literature on this issue is abundant and highly complex, in general the conclusions are not positive for market proponents (Valenzuela, Bellei, & De los Ríos, 2013; Bellei, 2009; Hsieh & Urquiola, 2003; Carnoy & McEwan, 2000; Gauri, 1998). The evidence shows that market-oriented reforms have increased educational inequities, in terms of social and academic segregation; social inequality of academic achievement; and school discriminatory practices (OECD, 2004). Additionally, no significant gains in the overall educational quality have been associated with market-oriented reforms in education.

Market dynamics have also prevailed over the expansion of post-secondary education in Chile since 1980, but more so during the last decade when coverage at this level really exploded (Meller, 2010; Brunner, 2009; Ginsburg, Espinoza, Popa, & Terano, 2003). "Traditional" universities, which existed before the neoliberal reform of 1980, have had to operate under self-funding logic, which includes charging students increasingly higher tuition fees. Students whose families cannot afford the cost of this higher education have access to loans that are highly subsidized by the state. On the other hand, the growth of post-secondary enrollment mainly occurred through the creation and expansion of private institutions. These institutions do not participate in the public admission system—based on academic records and admission tests—and charge students or their families the entire cost of the education provided. Since the mid-2000s a system of state-guaranteed loans has been administered by private banks with high interest rates for students who attend these private institutions. This regulatory and policy framework has slowly evolved into a higher education market, greatly differentiated by types of

institutions and highly stratified in relation to price, quality, and the social composition of the student body (Meller, 2010; Brunner & Uribe, 2006).

As we will discuss, the 2006 and 2011 student movements contended with this market-ruled educational system; students demanded a more active role of the state in education, especially to guarantee an acceptable standard of quality and reduce inequities. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the market-oriented educational policies described above were only part of an extensive neoliberal reform implemented by Pinochet's dictatorship during the 1980s, in which privatization policies were seen as instruments to reduce state power and eliminate welfare state institutions (Cavieres, 2011; Moulián, 2002). In this sense, students' push against neoliberal educational policies has crystallized the main criticism leveled against the broader neoliberal social and economic policies in Chile: high degrees of inequality between a privileged minority and the majority of the population (Sehnbruch & Donoso, 2011; Orellana, 2012). In fact, according to World Bank 2013 indicators, Chile has one of the most unequal income distributions in the world (see <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.GINI>).

The 2006 Secondary Students' Movement

In May 2006, thousands of students aged 15 to 18 were in the streets. They generated the "Penguin Revolution," in which education became both a political and public issue (Domedel & Peña y Lillo, 2008). This movement—which soon received the support of university students and teachers' union organizations—was the most significant set of demonstrations in Chile since the return of democracy in 1990. In the first stages of this movement, the demands were for providing free transportation passes for students and eliminating the fees associated with the university admission exam. However, the student struggle subsequently shifted to focus on the poor quality and high inequality of Chilean education in terms of attainment, quality, resources, and opportunities. In the political arena, the students' target was the Constitutional Law of Education (LOCE), the legal foundation of the educational system enacted by the Pinochet regime in 1990. The market-oriented institutions in Chilean education exist within a very complex legal framework that includes LOCE, the Chilean Constitution (also imposed by Pinochet's regime), the voucher law, and several other specialized regulations. LOCE, in particular, reduced the state to a subsidiary role and promoted privatization in education. LOCE was strongly opposed even during the dictatorship; university students and professors had been unsuccessfully calling for its repeal since the return to democracy.

More generally, although their discourse evolved over time and became manifest with diverse emphases, the students' critique consisted of four key elements: 1) the demand for free education, 2) the defense of public education, 3) the rejection of for-profit educational providers, and 4) the elimination of schools' discriminatory practices. As a whole, the ideals of this Chilean student movement represented a rejection of the rule of market dynamics in education. First, students *demand free education*, which implied a rejection of the co-payment system at the school level. Indeed, the fact that Chilean government-funded public and private schools are allowed to charge tuition fees to families has been a highly controversial issue, since compulsory education is formally "free" in Chile. International organizations, such as UNICEF and UNESCO, have also expressed doubts about the consistency of these practices with international treaties on the matter. Moreover, at the level of higher education, Chile is the country with the

highest private spending and fees in relative values among all of the OECD member states (OECD, 2011). Thus, Chilean families—not the state—have paid for the accelerated expansion of post-secondary education in recent years. The high private cost of post-secondary education was a key concern shared by both high school and university students.

Second, students *advocated for public education*. In fact, since the establishment of the market-oriented system in the early 1980s, public education at the secondary level had declined from 75% to less than 40% of national enrollment between 1980 and 2012. Similar declines have occurred at the primary level. These declines in the proportion of public education mark a reversion to the situation at the beginning of the Republic in the mid-nineteenth century. Importantly, the reduction in public education provision is not attributed to the superior quality of private education: evidence shows that, under equal conditions, student achievement is similar for public and voucher private schools (Bellei, 2009). Students' advocacy for strengthening public education implied a demand for increased state responsibility over public education, including the creation of a funding system that gives priority to public institutions and the end of municipalized primary and secondary school administration.

Third, students *rejected for-profit private providers of education*, especially when their profits were obtained from public funds. In Chile, since the creation of the voucher system, the fastest growing sector in primary and secondary education has been that of for-profit institutions, which receive state subsidies on equal terms with not-for-profit private institutions and public institutions (Elacqua, 2009). Even some private universities that are required to formally constitute themselves as non-profit institutions have engaged in business strategies that circumvent the spirit of the legislation (Mönckeberg, 2007), which further discredited profit-making in education in the public opinion. The pursuit of profit in education has been defended by neoliberal sectors as the engine that invigorates growth and leads innovation. In contrast, students saw it as the source of many undesirable practices in education, including discrimination against students from low-income families and students with low academic abilities, low quality education services, and the uncontrolled growth of low-cost undergraduate programs with low employability outcomes.

Finally, students pushed for the *elimination of discriminatory practices by schools* and the reduction of social segregation in education. Chilean schools apply arbitrary mechanisms for selecting students, both in the admission process and throughout students' academic trajectories. Primary and secondary schools select students based on past performance, prediction of future performance, student's behavior, family income, and other family characteristics. These selective mechanisms are especially prevalent in private institutions, including schools that receive state funding (Contreras, Sepúlveda, & Bustos, 2010; Bellei, 2009). Many of these practices have long been denounced by international organizations and human rights advocates as detrimental to students' right to education. Nevertheless, Chilean political and judicial institutions have defended the notion of "free enterprise" in the educational market, giving educational providers freedom to set their own rules to admit and expel students, arguing that the mere existence of public schools was enough to guarantee the right to education (Casas, Correa, & Wilhelm, 2001; Casas & Correa, 2002; Bellei & Pérez, 2000). These selection methods, especially those that discriminate based on family income, help explain the very high levels of socioeconomic segregation in Chilean schools (Valenzuela, Bellei, & De los Ríos, 2013), which place Chile's

educational system as one of the most socioeconomically segregated of all countries participating in PISA (OECD 2010).

Traditionally, Chilean student protests and movements had been of two kinds. The first kind of protest was clearly motivated by political issues, a sort of student-level “reflection” of the political process carried out by adults. In such cases, the basic codes were those of the activist who is either against the government or defends it, and whose “program” was framed in the context of social transformation and ideological struggle. The other kind of student protests involved different, concrete demands and direct claims, and thus expressed a clear interest group perspective. In these cases, the list of demands emphasized benefits that the students, as stakeholders, hoped to get from authorities.

The movement led by secondary students in 2006 certainly had clear aspects of both traditions: it articulated a solid ideology on educational issues and it brought a significant list of concrete demands to the negotiating table. Importantly, beyond these two aspects, the movement generated strong and widespread support and sympathy from the majority of Chile’s citizens, according to public opinion surveys. In our view, this happened for two reasons. First, the student movement managed to formulate a demand for equal opportunity in education around the idea of the right to quality education. Second, they identified specific foundations of the market-oriented framework of Chilean education that had to be dismantled to accomplish that goal. In other words, for these 21st century citizens, access to the school system was not enough. To them, equitable access to quality educational content and processes was the essential criterion to apply when evaluating whether or not the right to education has been guaranteed.

The 2011 Higher Education Students’ Movement

On 28 April 2011, 8,000 university students marched in different cities across Chile. The following month, a second march doubled that size. These two protests were only the beginning of what would become one of Chile’s major historical student movements, producing an array of demonstrations that had enormous citizen support. This movement lasted for seven months, during which university students, united by the Chilean Student Confederation (*Confederación de Estudiantes de Chile, Confech*), organized 36 weekly massive marches (some involving around 100,000 people in Santiago), took over their universities, held assemblies, and changed the public agenda in education. Camila Vallejo, President of the Student Federation of the University of Chile (*FECH*), and Giorgio Jackson, President of the Student Federation of Catholic University (*FEUC*), were two of the most charismatic leaders of the movement. With the help of leaders of regional universities, they transformed the protests into a national movement that attracted international attention. Soon, students from non-traditional private universities and secondary students joined and actively participated in the demonstrations (Cabalin, 2012; Salinas & Fraser, 2012).

Initially, students demanded more resources for public education and free access to universities for poor and middle-class students. Subsequently, however, they called for free post-secondary education for all, arguing that the state must guarantee the right to education from early childhood to higher education in equal conditions for all social classes. President Sebastián Piñera’s administration rejected the demand for free education. However, in an attempt to placate

the protesters, the government created new university scholarships to support students from the lowest socioeconomic quintiles. This did not appease protesters, because their main concern was the high cost of tuition and other fees associated with loans held by the majority of students. In Chile, families finance 73% of higher education costs, a figure that greatly exceeds the 16% average for OECD countries (OECD, 2011). Funding their education was a major issue for students because tuition and fees at Chilean universities were some of the most expensive among OECD countries, in relative terms (OECD, 2011).

The university system reforms in the 1980s created the conditions for the proliferation of new private universities in the following years, many of them of very low quality. In addition, according to available indirect evidence, despite being legally defined as non-profit organizations some of these universities yield substantial financial returns for their owners, thanks to legal subterfuge. Students criticized the for-profit spirit in the higher education system. Moreover, their discourse reflected notions of social justice in education, by rejecting the subsidiary role of the state in education, promoting universal non-discriminatory access to free education, and requesting progressive tax reform to publicly fund education (Vallejo, 2012; Jackson, 2013; Figueroa, 2013).

To accomplish their goals, students organized a comprehensive political strategy, extending their collaborative networks and involving additional stakeholders, such as the teachers' union, workers' unions of various labor sectors, and several civil society organizations. Student organizations and some of the leaders of the movement published brief policy documents and disseminated information extensively through traditional and new media. Through these actions they contributed to the re-politicization of public discussion about issues related to education and social equality. The political strategy of the movement allowed for the integration of different social demands in a national movement for education (Lustig, Mizala, & Silva, 2012).

After months of public demonstrations, students became more than protesters in the streets: they became political actors with a clear agenda of transformation and a coherent discourse about justice in education (Cabalin, 2012). Consequently, leaders of the students' movement were recognized by policy makers as relevant players in the educational policy debate. For example, the Minister of Education negotiated directly with these leaders to create a first set of policies to answer their demands; then, the Chilean Congress invited them to discuss the 2012 National Budget Law.

Ideologically, the university students' movement criticized the neoliberal system of education, as the "Penguin Revolution" had done five years before (Orellana, 2012). Summarizing, students asked for structural changes, such as a stronger state role in regulating and controlling educational institutions, a new system of public funding for education, reinforcement of the public universities, and the effective exclusion of for-profit organizations as educational providers at all levels. All these issues became part of the educational policy debate in Chile, and both the Government and the Parliament have discussed different proposals to tackle them.

Characteristics of the Chilean Student Movements: A New Generation of Activists

It is possible to say that Chilean students are part of a new generation of political actors in education. From a sociological perspective, Chile is experiencing a transition from a passive generation to an active one. Karl Mannheim (1952) argued that traumatic experiences play a key role in the production of a generational consciousness. For Chilean adults and policy makers, Pinochet's dictatorship was that kind of traumatic episode. Consequently, they incorporated the political compromises needed to end the indisputable reality of the military regime. Nevertheless, students who marched in 2006 and 2011 (most of whom were born in the era of new democracy) were not part of that story: they felt free to question the limits defined by the previous generation.

Edmunds and Turner (2005) offer a valuable explanation to understand the shift from a passive generation to an active one. For them, this change occurs when a generation is "able to exploit resources (political/educational/economic) to innovate in cultural, intellectual or political spheres" (p. 562). They conclude that a new generation is created when young people combine these resources and innovations with political opportunities and strategic leadership. Looking at the student movements from this perspective, Chile is experiencing the birth of a new generation. In order to deepen this idea, we identified four features that characterize the recent Chilean students' movements: 1) persistence; 2) combining short-term and more structural, long-term demands; 3) innovative forms of organization and communication; and 4) multiple mechanisms of coordination.

The first element that stands out regarding the movements has been its persistence. In effect, the first series of massive protests took place in 2001 and was known as the "mochilazo" (demonstration with backpacks). The "mochilazo" was articulated around a demand for better conditions and pricing of public transportation, and also a greater presence of the state in terms of administering fares. A high level of support among students in Santiago got the government to consent to their demands after a complex negotiation process. The "mochilazo" not only broke the public silence of students in a post-dictatorship context, it also showed the emergence of new forms of student organization. This involved a combination of the traditional student council (strengthened by the organizational and participation policies of the mid-1990s) with less structured but strongly coordinated and highly motivating student assemblies. The "mochilazo" experience also made clear that government institutions did not know how to process these demands, and that the traditional form of political negotiation was not effective in this new scenario. Some of these key features of the "mochilazo" were direct antecedents of the 2006 and 2011 students' movements, which continued with less intensity during the years 2012 and 2013. Student organizations involved in those processes have been accumulating knowledge and refining their political action in the field for a decade.

A second feature of the student movements has been the ability to articulate not only short-term demands (e.g., transportation, quality of the school's equipment and infrastructure), but also a set of demands that aim to transform structural aspects of the education system. For instance, the students challenged the regulatory legacy of the Constitutional Law of Education—which was enacted on the very last day of the Pinochet government in 1990. The students also protested against privatization, tuition charges, and discriminatory practices in the selection of students.

The “Penguin Revolution” of 2006 made clear that the student movement’s discourse of protest and critique was becoming increasingly stronger and more systemic, going well beyond a simple list of student benefits.

A third element characterizing the student movements has been innovation in the ways students have organized and expressed themselves. Because of Chilean young people’s general mistrust of traditional forms of political delegation and representation, students tried alternative ways of political organization. To be clear, political militancy and traditional forms of student organization have not disappeared, but they have been complemented, and in many cases exceeded, by new forms of participation, representation, and decision-making processes among students. For instance, in organizational terms, students used diverse assemblies and coordination agents with more horizontal and less mediated methodologies to deliberate and make decisions. When these organizations communicate to influence public opinion, student leaders act more like assembly “spokesmen” than an authority representing an organization. In both 2006 and 2011, student organizations also implemented sophisticated mass-media communication strategies, guided by leaders with outstanding and refined communication skills.

Finally, the coordination process has also changed, mainly through the intensive use of new communication technologies and instant messaging. These allow students to summon a group quickly, widely, and cheaply, and also to spread their ideas and protest outcomes through the mass media. Indeed, the media has not replaced but rather complemented the creation of various face-to-face initiatives, which gather representatives based on geographic (e.g., Santiago areas) or institutional (e.g., vocational secondary schools) criteria. Forms of public demonstration have also been diverse. This is particularly noticeable when looking at the 2011 student movement, during which students employed numerous forms of pressure towards authorities and also adopted a different range of strategies to spread their message to the general public. Strategies included traditional marches, strikes, and occupations, but also new forms of public demonstration, such as massive dances, carnivals, street debates, and videos and performances in public places.

Conclusion: Chilean Students as Educational Policy Stakeholders

The student movement is an ongoing process and some demands are still being subjected to political debate, but there has already been a tremendous impact on Chilean educational policy (Bellei, Contreras, & Valenzuela, 2008; Bellei, Contreras, & Valenzuela, 2010). The fact that a student movement strongly affected both the policy debate and policy decisions represents a significant change for Chilean society, and is of major interest from a comparative perspective on educational policy.

In fact, after the secondary student protests in 2006 all changes seemed possible. President Michelle Bachelet created an Advisory Presidential Council for Quality in Education to debate and propose policy guidelines for improving both quality and equity in education. After six months of deliberations, the Advisory Council presented a report that encompassed a wide variety of recommendations, including strengthening the right to access quality education free of charge; holding the state responsible for guaranteeing quality education; establishing quality assurance institutions in education; reforming the institutional system of public school

administration; and significantly modifying the current funding system (Consejo Asesor Presidencial, 2006).

President Bachelet embraced some of the Advisory Council's recommendations and proposed a "new architecture of Chilean education." She sent to Parliament an ambitious set of legal reforms, which included: a new General Law of Education that replaced the previously mentioned Constitutional Law of Education; the creation of a Superintendence in Education to control the legal aspects of the system; the creation of an Agency for Quality in Education; changes in the structure of educational cycles; and the reform of the administration of the public schools. Each of these reforms, except the last, was approved. In our view, the combination of a sense of emergency and social pressure from the student movement, with the consensus view generated by the Advisory Council, gave policy makers a new perspective, opened unexpected political opportunities, and resulted in a policy agenda focused on institutional transformation of the Chilean educational system.

The 2011 student movement's impact on higher education has also been considerable. President Piñera and his Ministers of Education disagreed with some of the most emblematic demands of the students, including free education, giving priority to public education, and ending public funding to for-profit providers. However, the administration implemented a new system of public funding that increased the proportion of students with higher education scholarships and significantly reduced student loan interest rates. The administration also passed a tax reform to fund new educational policies and proposed a major change in the accreditation system of post-secondary educational institutions, which is currently being discussed by the Chilean Parliament. Further, the Chilean Parliament created special commissions to investigate some private universities regarding potentially illegal for-profit activities (see Commission Report, 2011; Mönckeberg, 2007). Finally, the educational policy issues raised by the student movement have been intensively debated in the current presidential campaign in Chile.

In general terms, students framed their struggle within the "politics of meanings" in education. Thus, from an educational policy perspective, the student movements challenged public understanding of the education system because the students rejected the notion of the problem-solving approach supported by traditional policy makers. Certainly, students participated in defining educational problems, but students also participated in the discussion of policy implications. As political actors in the educational arena, students tried to be part of the contexts of influence, text production, and practice (Bowe, Ball, & Gold, 1992). These aspects of student participation extended the notion of the policy cycle beyond the diagnostic-design-implementation-evaluation cycle that characterizes the bureaucratic structure and technocratic process of educational policy creation (Reimers & McGinn, 1997). The student movements not only highlighted "new problems," but also new interpretations of those problems. Such interpretations implied the need for systemic changes in education, which were outside the framework of reference for Chilean policy makers.

From this perspective, the consequences of the student movements are also evident beyond the educational field. The debate about education in Chile has been linked to larger social concerns, such as Chile's unequal economic model and the country's lack of participatory institutional structures. Thus, as social movement, students can be considered "agents actively engaged in the

production and maintenance of meaning for constituents, antagonists, and bystanders” (Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 163).

During the last decades, the design and evaluation of public policies in health, poverty, and education increasingly became technical activities mainly engaged in by professional experts. Consequently, students—like social program “beneficiaries”—have traditionally been excluded from the processes of engaging educational policies. The Chilean student movements showed the limits of this notion. Increasingly, policy makers, especially in matters like education, need to consider social and cultural aspects to design and evaluate policies; introducing participatory processes into the policy cycle seems to be the most appropriate way to accomplish this (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010; Reimers & McGinn, 1997).

The shift toward increased participation of local actors in the educational policy process goes in the opposite direction of the documented growing relevance of international organizations in the educational policy field. In fact, educational policies have become enmeshed with the new dynamics of globalization, where the main concern is to increase economic competitiveness. Within this context, supranational organizations—such as the World Bank and other regional banks, International Monetary Fund, UNESCO, and OECD—have created a network of interactions with public authorities, policymaking agencies, and transnational corporations that highly influence national educational policies (Ball & Youdell, 2007). This has been the case for Chilean higher education in the last decades (Ginsburg, Espinoza, Popa, & Terano, 2003). Nevertheless, since public policies can also express a collective will to solve social problems, the 2006 and 2011 student movements reminded Chilean policy makers that—despite a globalized policy field—they are still socially and locally accountable.

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