

## Towards Personal Transformation: Faculty Social Justice Teaching in Doctoral Education

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While there has been an increased focus on designing and implementing social justice curricula and pedagogy in many graduate programs in education, gaps remain in the existing research on how faculty who teach doctoral students navigate and play an active role in teaching social justice and education. In a collective case study, I examine how two faculty members in education engage in teaching on social justice with doctoral students. Three major findings were generated from the multiple data sources to answer the research questions. First, the participants acknowledged a responsibility to expose students to social justice through their teaching. Second, the participants engaged students in critical dialogue to analyze and reflect on social justice. Third, the participants established advising and mentoring relationships to engage students about power, privilege, oppression, and social change.

There has been an increased focus on designing and implementing social justice curricula and pedagogy in many graduate programs in education (Berkovich, 2017; Holsinger, 2016; Mayhew & Fernández, 2007). Given the continued social inequities related to race, gender, class, and much more that plague education at every level, preparation programs must provide graduate students with opportunities to interrogate injustices on both a personal and structural level. These opportunities may result in the development of being, relating, and leading for social change in various educational contexts for students (Shields, 2014).

Research indicates that graduate programs in education either avoided or limited teaching about social justice because of faculty lack of skills and knowledge on how to facilitate such learning (Diem & Carpenter, 2013; Pounder, Reitzug, & Young, 2002). Thus, university-based education programs remain under scrutiny by scholars, employers, politicians, and the public for failing to help future educational leaders develop knowledge and skills to address complicated aspects of social justice that include race, culture, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and ability in relation to power, privilege, and oppression (Black & Murtadha, 2007; Normore & Jean-Marie, 2010). Barriers to engaging graduate students in topics of social justice are the dispositions, values, knowledge, and skills of faculty members to facilitate such topics (Aguilar, 2017; Edwards, Loftin, Nance, Riser, & Smith, 2014).

Many scholars insist that educational graduate programs can be environments for students and faculty to grapple with oppression and privilege on both personal and institutional levels (Dantley & Green, 2015; Furman, 2012; Gayles & Kelly, 2007; López, Magdaleno, Reis, 2006). Thus, faculty play important role in influencing the curriculum and pedagogy, both in and outside of the classroom, and serve as gatekeepers and/or gate-openers for doctoral students (Guerra & Pazey, 2016). Faculty hold an important role in the socialization of doctoral students

for social justice, whether as an instructor in the classroom, a chair or advisor during the research process, a dissertation committee member, or a mentor. Along with other researchers, Byrne-Jimenez (2010) calls for faculty members to “rethink underlying assumptions, actions and policies, roles and relationships, pedagogical approaches, and levels of preparedness that challenge current modes of operation and force faculty to answer ‘why’ and for ‘whom’” (p. 6). Within today’s political and social climate in which injustices are exacerbated, there is a need for education reform. Faculty within graduate education programs must possess knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to design and operate social justice-oriented programs inside and outside of the classroom (Aguilar, 2017; Edwards et al., 2014).

While much has been theorized about social justice curricula and pedagogy in graduate education (Brown, 2006; Furman, 2012; George, 2017), some gaps remain in the existing research on how education faculty who teach doctoral students navigate and play an active role in teaching on social justice. Also, much of the scholarship on teaching on social justice focuses on undergraduate or master’s level, for example, rather than on doctoral education (Adams & Bell, 2016). This article will help fill these gaps by focusing specifically on teaching about social justice with doctoral students in education programs. In this article, I examine how two education faculty members engage in teaching on social justice with doctoral students. I focus on the following research questions:

- (1) How do faculty navigate teaching on social justice?
- (2) In what ways do faculty engage in teaching strategies to develop students' understanding and knowledge around social justice?

Social justice is an elusive concept with complex, frequently contradictory meanings (Adams & Bell,

Griffin, P, 2007 ; Gewirtz, 1998; North, 2009). To frame this study, I focus on social justice and injustice. Social justice is often defined as a process and goal towards equitability of resources (Adams & Bell, 2016). In other words, social justice focuses on liberation for all people. Within this article, I use the term injustices to refer to the intentional examination of oppression (Leibowitz, Naidoo, & Mayet, 2017). I maintain that to develop a capacity for educational transformation, there must be a focus on both injustices (oppression) and social justice (liberation) (Giroux, 2011; hooks, 1994). A more comprehensive and detailed understanding of faculty teaching approaches to social justice in doctoral education can serve as a guide for designing and implementing curricula and pedagogy aimed at providing students with opportunities for personal transformation and societal change in education.

### Conceptual Framework

Rooted in critical theory, the conceptual framework for this study consists of critical pedagogy and transformative criticality. Inspired by Paulo Freire's (1970) notion of education as an exercise of freedom that requires a critical approach to knowledge and reality, critical pedagogy views teaching as a political act and rejects the notion that knowledge construction is neutral. In this pedagogical approach, education is a form of personal and collective freedom grounded in students and faculty actively creating knowledge rather than simply consuming it. In critical pedagogy, educators are tasked with addressing important social problems, encouraging agency, and promoting critical consciousness for the purpose of personal and collective transformation (Giroux, 2011). The language of critique in critical pedagogy requires instructors and students to analyze macro and micro systems of power and injustices that go unchecked in traditional pedagogy, norms, values, and standards. Put simply, this approach to pedagogy allows for ongoing individual and collective grappling with knowledge, values, social relations, and political agency (Giroux, 2011). The mode of analysis in critical pedagogy interrogates text, institutions, social relations, and ideologies that impact all levels of society. Such a dialectical analysis allows for a critique of oppression and privilege and an understanding of how power relationships interact to affect lived experiences. Critical pedagogy uses education to consider broader societal change. Bell Hooks (2014) wrote, "[T]he classroom becomes a dynamic place where transformation in social relations are concretely actualized, and the false dichotomy between the world outside and inside of the academy disappears" (p. 115). Consequently, critical pedagogy takes into account that the classroom space is not neutral but a microcosm of society in which uneven power dynamics must be disrupted.

The usage of critical pedagogy aims to assist learners to imagine change on both the macro and

micro levels (Giroux, 2011). The language of change or social justice goes beyond the recognition of power dynamics to offer opportunities to imagine power relations working for justice and freedom. Put differently, McArthur (2010) wrote that critical pedagogues have "a belief in the interrelation between education and society, and a commitment to change in education and society to ensure greater social justice" (p. 495). Critical pedagogy can assist in societal, educational, and personal transformation.

### Transformative Criticality

Criticality centers on an individual's ability to critique and challenge uneven power relations in everyday life and consciously seek justice (Brookfield, 2005). More specifically, criticality can be understood through the domains that are engaged by critical reason, self-reflection, and action, including formal knowledge, the self, and the world, (Barnett, 2015; Johnston, Ford, Mitchell, & Myles, 2011). According to Johnston et al., (2012), the transformative potential of education is in developing awareness of self in the context of wider social relations for political engagement. The development of transformative criticality specifically consists of students becoming critical beings who critique dominant knowledge, engage in reconstruction of self, and employ collective action to reconstruct a just society (Barnett, 2015; Johnston et al., 2012). In other words, criticality involves the development and application of critical consciousness, knowledge, and skills for social transformation.

The conceptual framework of critical pedagogy and transformative criticality addresses the relational aspects of the environment, interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships, content, and material delivery that assist in creating learning spaces for opportunities to interrogate injustices and imagine new, socially just systems. Critical pedagogy provides the broader context of transformative learning while transformative criticality delves deeper into the ongoing process of self-reflection and analyses for collective questioning, criticism, and creativity around social transformation. This framework builds upon existing literature in educational leadership preparation programs studies in education by providing a more nuanced look into both individual and collective development (Diem & Carpenter, 2012; Edwards et al., 2014; Furman, 2012). The framework is intended to be useful in the examination of the multidimensional aspects of teaching in which that faculty engage through doctoral education.

### Methods

To conduct this study, I used a collective case study approach. Stake (1994) defined collective case

study as having “a number of [individual] cases jointly in order to inquire into [a] phenomenon, population, or general condition” (p. 237). The use of such an approach provides analytical insights on things that are similar and different between cases. In this study I used two analogous individual participants (or cases) to highlight the particular phenomenon of faculty teaching approaches that engage doctoral students in issues of social justice. Baxter and Jack (2008) identified the importance of placing boundaries on cases to indicate breadth and depth of the study while delimiting what is being studied. The boundaries for this study are tenure-track faculty members who teach doctoral students in educational leadership/higher education programs and self-identify as employing social justice in their teaching approach. Doctoral teaching in this study means that faculty members are teaching courses, advising program students, overseeing dissertation committees, contributing to program design, and participating in department activities such as faculty recruitment and selection, program admissions, and other committee work.

### Participants

To select participants, I engaged in purposeful sampling through specific criteria (Patton, 2015). I selected two faculty members for this study due to their teaching responsibilities with doctoral students and vulnerability to share and engage in critical reflection throughout the research process. Other participants were excluded from the study due to only working with master’s students, not serving as dissertation chairs, and/or self-selecting out. The faculty members who self-selected out did not respond to communication or communicated that they were unable to participate in the study. Faculty who participated in this study taught doctoral students in an education graduate program at institutions with a Carnegie classification of high research activity. Their teaching experience ranged from 4 years to 23 years in higher education through face-to-face or hybrid (face-to-face and online) instruction. The faculty taught doctoral seminar courses such as Educational Leadership, Qualitative Research, Student Development Theory, and Independent Study. Details of participants’ information and pseudonyms are shown in Table 1.

### Data Generation Procedures

Given that the dialectical relationship is an essential component of this study design, data were co-created by the study participants and me through document analysis, semi-structured interviews, artifacts, the researcher’s reflective journal, and email correspondences. Hydén (2014) called for the

partnership between the researcher and participants to be a “dance of balancing involvement” with shared responsibility of constructing knowledge (p. 8). Additionally, the use of multiple data sources provides rich data from which to draw analysis. Baxter and Jack (2008) noted that each data set in a study could be bound together to deepen the understanding of the phenomenon. Prior to the first interview, I analyzed each faculty member’s course syllabus, teaching philosophy, and curriculum vitae to gain insight into their teaching goals and experiences with social justice. Bowen (2009) noted that document analysis provides the researcher context into spaces participants occupy and how they operate within these spaces.

I analyzed these documents with close attention to language and groups of words that indicate the deconstruction of dominant knowledge that perpetuates injustice, critiques uneven power relations, notes opportunities for personal reflection, and focuses on the development or goal of emancipation, democracy, equity, and justice. Additionally, I used the data generated from the documents as an elicitation technique during the first interview that created additional personal interview questions related to each of the study participants and their contexts.

In a qualitative approach, interviews are an important data source for in-depth responses to people’s lived experiences (Crotty, 2015). The participants and I engaged in two 60- to 120-minute semi-structured interviews. I invited the participants to reflect on their journey to becoming faculty members, on how they prepare doctoral students around social justice, on what is involved in critical teaching, and on the reasons behind their teaching approaches in and outside of the classroom. In the second interview, I asked participants to provide artifacts to generate information-rich data. The use of artifacts as an elicitation technique enhances the interview interactions by creating space for the participants to explain the significance of the artifact in relation to their teaching. According to Barton (2015), the use of elicitation techniques invites participants to reflect, construct, name, and explain their lived experience in an innovative matter. I asked participants to share documents, objects, pictures, videos, art, and/or metaphors that demonstrate their teaching to develop students’ capacity to engage in critical teaching and learning.

Due to the topic of social justice, the participants and I engaged in a humanizing research processes that center lived experiences through storytelling, story gathering, relationship building, and reciprocal engagements with each other (Kinloch & San Pedro, 2014). More specifically, a humanizing research process in a collective case study allowed for the participants and me to push against visible and invisible uneven power relations that result in racism, sexism, classism, and other oppression throughout the

Table 1  
*Study Participants Information*

Name (Pseudonym)	Race & Gender	Years of Teaching	Courses	Institution	# of Advisee	Research Agenda
Dr. Smith	White Woman	23 Full Professor	Leadership & Qualitative Research	Midwest-Research I	10	leadership for academic excellence and social justice
Dr. Moore	Black Man	4 Assistant Professor	Student Development Theory, and Independent study	Southwest-Research I	4	experiences of minoritized students across postsecondary education

Table 2  
*Data Sources*

Data Sources	Account
Documents- CV, Syllabi, & Teaching Philosophy	6
1.5-2 Hours Semi-Structured Interview	4
Artifacts- Pictures, Quotes, & Student Feedback	7
Researcher Reflective Journals	8
Email Correspondence Follow-up	10

data generations process using dialogue, active listening, vulnerability, and critical reflections.

I wrote reflective journal entries to document my decisions, reactions, questions, and interpretations throughout the research process to maintain self-awareness. All journal entries became part of the data generation and analyses to preserve the integrity of the participants’ narratives. I shared some of my reflections with the study participants for opportunities to engage in relationship building and data generation. Throughout the research process, the participants and I engaged in e-mail correspondences as follow-ups to interviews.

**Data Analysis**

The data analysis process was iterative and involved examining, categorizing, and tabulating to make sense of the data (Saldaña, 2016). Preliminary data analysis consisted of me re-familiarizing myself with all the data sources through reading and re-reading transcriptions of interviews, journal entries, and documents. There were two cycles of coding. First, I created a priori codes that were influenced by the conceptual framework and literature. These codes included “power”, “privilege” “oppression”, “dialectical interaction”, “environment”, “content”, “content delivery relationship”, “self-reflection”, “critique,” and “social action”. I then used in vivo and pattern coding methods to assign second order, deeper codes from the conceptual framework subcategories.

This approach helped me to make meaning of each participant’s lived experiences separately while exploring patterns and differences between the cases.

**Trustworthiness**

To conduct a trustworthy study, I engaged in reflective journaling, peer debriefing, and triangulation. Throughout the data analysis, as mentioned above, I kept a reflective journal with memos to note the method by which I was making sense of the data, my expectations, and my assumptions prior to data generation. I also engaged in peer debriefing, where colleagues commented on the research design and developing findings of the study. Finally, triangulation of the various methods—e.g., document analysis, interviews, artifacts, and researcher journals—allowed the phenomenon of the study to be explored from multiple contexts of the participants.

**Limitation**

There are some limitations concerning the findings of this study. First, I did not observe or interview faculty in their institutional environment. Instead, I relied exclusively on participants’ self- reported data about their teaching. Adding observations in the participants’ teaching environment would have added additional perspectives on faculty teaching on social justice. Additionally, I only included tenure track

faculty from high research activity institutions. The inclusion of teaching approaches of clinical faculty (non-tenure line) or other faculty from other institution types may result in different findings related to doctoral education. I did not include doctoral students in this study. Doctoral students would have provided insight on how they engage or disengage with the faculty teaching approaches. Lastly, I did not include education faculty who teach undergraduate education students as it is outside the scope of this paper. It is important to note that teaching on social justice is not limited to doctoral students; however, undergraduate teaching entails different challenges and strategies (see Cochran-Smith, 2010; Gay & Kirkland, 2003).

### Findings

Through the research process three major findings were generated to answer the research questions. First, the participants acknowledged a responsibility to expose students to social justice through their teaching. Second, the participants engaged students in critical dialogue to analyze and reflect on social justice. Third, the participants established advising and mentoring relationships to engage students about power, privilege, oppression, and social change. I organized each finding section starting with in-classroom interactions, then to out-of-classroom engagements with students. In this study, teaching was not limited to the formal classroom environment.

### Acknowledgement of a Responsibility

The study participants acknowledged a responsibility to expose students to social justice in their teaching. Both of the participants were explicit about including issues of power, privilege, and oppression in their teaching with the goal to assist students in consciousness-raising. For example, Dr. Moore commented that his teaching philosophy revolves around providing students with opportunities to raise their consciousness. He added, "My job is to not simply meet people where they are, which I do think is important, but then how do I help them grow.... How do I raise consciousness in a way that's transformative, equity [*sic*], and consciousness based?" Similarly, Dr. Smith centered social justice and injustices in her teaching to invite students to consider ways in which, as educators, they influence just educational reform. Dr. Smith discussed why she engaged students on both injustice and social justice:

Because I think if we ignore that [social justice and injustice], we focus on technical change rather than deep cultural and social change. And if we really want change that results in equity then we need to do something beyond the technical.

The quote from Dr. Smith speaks to the cognitive development needed both to understand injustice and to enact social justice that causes societal change; therefore, the participant needed to engage in teaching that invokes cognitive development.

Both participants believed educators needed to have skill and knowledge to address the power dynamics of oppression and privilege and to establish socially justice practices and policies. Although Dr. Moore's and Dr. Smith's goals of radical educational reform were rooted in institutional changes, they focused on consciousness-raising at the individual level as well. Such a teaching approach indicates that engaging students in teaching about social justice is a journey or developmental process that starts on a personal level. This is in alignment with what Mezirow (1991) called a disorienting dilemma that creates space for critical reflection and personal transformation.

It is important to note that the participants taught students who were unfamiliar or uninterested with social justice personally and academically. Dr. Smith claimed, "I don't shy away from talking about things like racism or homophobia or xenophobia," no matter the knowledge base or dispositions of students. She is explicit about social oppression and privilege at the onset of each course she teaches in order to notify students that they would be engaging in tough conversations around these issues. Both of the participants spoke of engaging students on oppression such as racism, sexism, classism, ableism, heterosexism, and much more through an intersectional lens. Put differently, the participants did not focus on one type of oppression but asked students to consider how multiple oppressions impact each other. For example, Dr. Moore described questions he asks students to reflect on and discuss the following: "So if we're talking about gender, how would this look different if we talk about class? If we're talking about class, what if we add sexuality?"

For both participants, a responsibility of exposing students to social justice included intentional engagement of critical theories (e.g., critical race theory, critical spirituality, feminism) alongside seminal literature and theories in education. Through probing questions, Drs. Moore and Smith invited students to reflect on who is included and excluded and the roles students play in these systems (e.g., racism, capitalism, sexism), based on their lived experiences and values. Dr. Smith provided a story of a Black man student who refuted Black respectability politics in education and believed that the students he worked with should act the "right way", in his words. Although the student pushed back in the class discussion, he had opportunities to engage with classmates and Dr. Smith on the root causes of Black respectability politics. She ended the story with this testimony:

Four weeks later and he came to class and you could tell just by the way he walked in that something was different. He came up after [class] and he said, "I've been thinking about our readings and our conversation... I realized that my parents are university educated, and I've often thought, well, why can't these other Black kids be like me?," and he said, "I realized now how wrong that was." He totally changed. He changed his interest, his dissertation topic.

Even when students resisted conversations about social justice, both participants spoke passionately about still having a responsibility to expose students to the components of social justice through readings and class assignments so that when they are ready, students will have tools to reflect on past teachings and possibly act. Such an approach to teaching was not solely focused on students who lack a foundation or disposition on social justice but included students who sought out these faculty members to continue their growth both personally and academically. For example, Dr. Moore explained that he chaired committees for or mentored students who had chosen to do "mesearch" that consisted of research inspired by their lived experiences. Put differently, this finding shows that consciousness-raising can occur at any level of knowledge of power, privilege, and oppression, and exposure to these topics is beneficial to students at all levels. It is important to note that the participants had flexible pedagogical approaches and relationships with students that allowed for these faculty members to engage students appropriately in and outside the classroom. One of the ways the participants carry out their educational responsibility is through dialogue.

### **Engaged Critical Dialogue**

The participants used students' personal and professional lived experiences, theory, readings, faculty written feedback, group activities, spaces, and relationships to invoke dialogue on social justice. Guerra, Nelson, Jacobs, and Yamamura (2013) found that critical dialogue challenged students' thinking, leading, and researching around social injustice. Dr. Smith explained the philosophy underpinning her teaching approach involving critical dialogue, "[D]ialogue isn't for one thing. It's ontological; it's not just talking, it's a way of life. So, it's an openness to other perspectives and other people, and its goal isn't agreement. But understanding. And I think that's really important." The participants used dialogue to engage students in analyzing injustices, imagining social justice, and challenging students' positionalities. Similar to Metcalfe and Game (2008), the participants described dialogue as opportunities to "know and learn with rather than about others" (p. 347).

The use of dialogue through multiple pedagogical strategies (reading, feedback, etc.) invited students and faculty to share their lived experiences and interpretations of course readings to create what Giroux (2011) called a democracy classroom. Democracy classrooms move away from a banking model and allow for students and faculty to co-construct knowledge (Giroux, 2011). Both participants used probing questions in journal reflections, small group activities, and group discussions. Such questions included defining key terms, identifying scholars' arguments, recognizing literature gaps, synthesizing multiple readings, analyzing for oppression and privilege, and connecting concepts and theory to lived experiences and real-world application. Dr. Smith used local and national events to provoke dialogue around social injustices. Dr. Smith insisted that helping students to understand what was happening locally was vital because it constituted their lived experiences and the educational context in which they will lead. She stated, "I ask them to really unpack and think critically about them [local events]. I think once they begin to do that they get that mindset." This approach provided students with opportunities to participate in various dialogues that included theoretical, personal, and real-world contexts in which students analyze issues of power and consider possible actions for the communities they serve as educational leaders.

The participants' critical approaches to teaching highlighted the dialectical relationship between theory and practice through the analysis of various frameworks. For Dr. Moore, students learned theories before conducting analysis of their possibilities and limitations. Dr. Smith used critical frameworks alongside seminal works to engage students in criticality around power, privilege, and oppression. Students developing criticality involved critiques of hidden injustices that are taken for granted in ways of knowing in the field of education. Both participants asked students to consider issues of race, gender, sex, and other social categories addressed within seminal literature. Such an approach to seminal work attempted to address dominant knowledge production that enabled oppressive educational conditions while engaging students in the historical context of the respective field, and thus engaging students in criticality.

To challenge dominant knowledge production, the participants discussed including literature from diverse authors in their syllabuses to provide students with various ways of knowing, theorizing, and conducting research. Scholars recommended using course readings as a tool to expose students to topics of social justice and injustice and to develop critical consciousness (e.g., racism, sexism, heterosexism) (Capper, Theoharis, and Sebastian, 2006; Marshall & Hernandez, 2013). Dr. Moore invited other scholars

into the classroom to dialogue with students and share their knowledge and experiences. However, Dr. Moore was intentional about connecting scholars, content, and students together in ways that deepen learning. For example, Dr. Moore invited White scholars to guest lecture to teach on Whiteness and demonstrate ways that challenge White privilege:

[Be]cause I teach mainly White students. So, I always bring in a White scholar who does critical work around Whiteness somehow. It might not be the center of their work, but they're going to make comments. I think it allows White students, as they're going through their own development in class and consciousness raising, to see another White person who has a progressive stance on race... who are just regular people.

To engage with various theories such as student involvement theory and transformational educational leadership, Drs. Smith and Moore both incorporated questions about the multidimensional manifestation of privilege and oppression in order to engage students in a practice of critique. For instance, according to Dr. Moore, teaching students how to ask critical questions exposed them to power relations of oppression and privilege. He explained,

"We're not trying to check off the boxes, you're just trying to have a mode of being and practices, that ask the additional questions..." The act of questioning assisted students in developing a capacity to uncover the invisible, analyzing the complexities of injustices, and engaging in authentic dialogue.

Spaces in and out of the classroom mattered to the study participants in terms of assisting to facilitate dialogue around topics of social justice. Capper et al. (2006) noted that when a learning environment provides emotional safety, students are more likely to take risks in challenging their bias and lived experiences and are more open to personal transformations. Dr. Smith explained, "I want to sit in a square so we can all see each other, and we are all sort of equal again." It was not how the space is arranged that made this comment unique; it was the reason for such a layout. Although space alone cannot promote equity, the spatial arrangements reinforced who was included or excluded. The arrangement communicated that everyone sitting at the table was visible and invited to engage in tough dialogue. Dr. Smith sat with students and engaged in dialogue without being in front of the room. This was an attempt to disrupt teacher-student hierarchy and allow for more than one voice or expertise in the room. The use of the space also allowed for the development of a collective dialogue and classroom community.

For Dr. Moore, he sought to create safe spaces within the classroom. He clarified:

My job is to manage a safe classroom. To me, a dangerous classroom is when something is said that could be very traumatic and also reproducing trauma and oppression for a member. My job is to make sure the learning and raising [of] consciousness for someone who, we all hold privileged identities, don't come too much at the expense of someone who holds that marginalized identity.

In the literature, creating "safe" classrooms has been critiqued for the impossible task of removing risk and discomfort around controversial issues for students with privileged identities (Cook-Sather, 2016). However, Dr. Moore's articulation of a "safe" classroom protected marginalized students from continued oppression. He discussed how it was his job to "try to read that thin line of giving someone room to grow without letting them just go off the rails and say something oppressive," which required engaging students around how to participate in dialogue on topics on power, privilege, and oppression. Such an approach aligns with Applebaum's (2009) call for teachers to create safe classrooms for systematically marginalized students instead of for students who are systemically privileged. Dr. Moore explained how he guides students when conflicts arise in classroom dialogue:

...Listen to understand, instead of to respond...when someone says something that triggers you, which probably will happen, ask a follow-up question first... [be]cause you may have heard something, and they may be just using different language, right? So, ask them first what . . . they mean. Then, if they still say the same thing, then you should be critical of what they said, but give them an opportunity to be on the same page with you before you respond.

The above comment by Dr. Moore highlights how difficult having and facilitating dialogue around justice can be and the intentional work that is required of both faculty and students. Outside of the formal classroom, the participants used dialogue in their advising and mentoring approach. Although the participants were attentive to the learning environment, they did not discuss the invisible power relations that mediated such spaces and can limit such dialogue. Daloz Parks (2005) noted that learning environments, especially classrooms, are social systems "inevitably made up of a number of different factions and acted on by multiple forces" and which provide "an occasion for learning and practicing leadership with a social group" (p. 7). In

short, faculty and students can use the dynamics occurring within various learning environments through collective reflection and power analysis as a means to practice resistance to injustice and establish social justice interactions.

### **Established Advising and Mentoring Relationships**

Advising and mentoring were other teaching activities the participants used to engage doctoral students in topics of social justice. Drs. Moore and Smith were not assigned students, but students were able to select them as advisors. The flexibility for open selection allowed the participants to be selective on students they chose to partner with. Dr. Smith noted the following:

I try not to take on students who aren't interested in social justice. Because I just find the work boring if it doesn't have that focus. That doesn't mean that I don't inherit a few from time to time. If people are exploring topics I always try and push them to see whether or not there's an area that is really a just policy. Is it really just or are there equity implications and issues that need to be explored as well?

Dr. Moore implied something similar with students he preferred to work with as their advisor and mentor. Such a preference illustrates the participants' unapologetic approach to engaging students in social justice. Notably, both participants conducted research and engaged in service that examined oppression, privilege, and social change in education. Consequently, Drs. Moore and Smith connected students to research and networking opportunities that would expand students' knowledge and skills on social justice.

Dr. Smith described her relationship with students through development advising, which is a mutual process of shared responsibility for social and academic success. A development advising approach focused on the process of promoting students' consciousness throughout the doctoral experience (Peña, 2012). Dr. Smith spoke about wanting to be friends with her students. Through this relationship there was mutual learning and talking about issues of social justice and injustices. Dr. Smith claimed that the relationship pushed the students in their critical consciousness raising. When she described her relationships with students, it was in the context of academic exercises, such as dissertation writing and publications. She stated the following:

I do try and engage them in all sorts of different ways. I stay in touch with them. They come to the house in groups so that as groups we talk about their research interests and what's happening. Really always try to have students go to conferences with me. To the extent that they want to when they're also working full time, I'll publish with any of them. Either they can work on my projects, or I'll help them with their own papers.

While Dr. Smith emphasized advising, Dr. Moore focused on developing mentorship with students he advised. In fact, his approach to mentoring was inspired by his own experience of critical mentorship with a doctoral advisor. He mentioned that his mentoring relationship with students began with the identification and discussion of the roles that the student and he would play in the process. Dr. Moore said, "This is going to be a relationship that we're going to build over time to build trust and understanding." All of his mentees were working on critical dissertations that centered on marginalized people's lived experiences in oppressive structural systems. Due to the critical nature of his students' dissertations, Dr. Moore mentored students on structural power analysis through the use of critical frameworks.

To support his students, Dr. Moore assisted them in their creation of a team of mentors from other institutions who had similar research interests and could provide guidance and collaborations. A team of mentors echoes Mullen, Fish, and Huting (2010) argument that a doctoral student should have multiple mentors due to the complexities of the emerging scholar's experience. Dr. Moore explained, "I try to kind of outsource it but make it more [a] collaborative team of mentorship." Dr. Moore acted as a sponsor and assisted students with creating a network to support their critical inquiry.

The participants detailed how their relationships with students were reciprocal. Dr. Moore spoke with enthusiasm about being challenged and inspired by his students' critical work, such as incarcerated post-secondary students and undocumented Latino/a students. Meanwhile, Dr. Smith declared that she constantly learned from her students and used their stories and examples as pedagogical resources in her teaching. The faculty-student relationship allowed the participants to continue to develop their criticality around social justice and justices with students.

Both participants spoke of informal interactions that strengthen their relationships with students. For instance, Dr. Smith explained, she becomes friends with her students because of their shared interests that move beyond their time in the doctoral program. The relationship is not one-sided; the participants share their journeys as scholar and persons who hope to continue their development around social justice with the students they mentor and advise.

In the advising and mentoring relationship, the participants are in a more vulnerable position for critically engaging in social justice teaching because such a belief for social critique and justice was evident in their research, service, and ways of being. The participants are role models for students to learn how to integrate social justice into their ways of knowing and being. In alignment with work by Aguilar (2017) and Guerra et al. (2013), faculty must model anti-oppressive leadership

and participate in self-reflection for the development of critical consciousness in various learning environments.

### Discussion

This collective case study examined how two education faculty members engage in teaching on social justice with doctoral students. Both faculty members acknowledged a responsibility to exposing students to social justice through critical dialogue and student-faculty relationships (advising and mentoring). Through these approaches to teaching, it is evident that faculty members intentionally aim to provide doctoral students with learning environments and relationships to encourage the understanding and analyzing of their individual socio-political positions that are influenced by, and have influence on, society, especially educational norms, values, practices, and policies. The multiple teaching approaches used by faculty members centered on assisting students in considering ways of being, knowing, and leading around racism, sexism, classism, and much more. The participants' social justice teaching approach are in alignment with Mezirow (1991) and Brookfield's (2005) call for meaning-making processes with adult learners that lead to a deep shift in perspective in which thinking, action, and discourse become more open to new ways of being.

The teaching approaches used by the faculty limited the external gaze of social justice. In other words, the curriculum and pedagogy did not center the unjust actions of others that students may have to navigate, but centered on personal responsibility of students, educators, and people. Additionally, a focus on personal critical consciousness and responsibility allowed opportunities to teach about the root causes and structural manifestation of oppression that provide a more complex analysis for social justice. Drs. Moore and Smith modeled critical consciousness through the way they made sense of their identities, positions, and relationships that enabled both oppression and liberation in their teaching approaches. Moreover, these faculty members were vulnerable with students in their shortcomings in relation to their teaching, research, and focus on social justice. Such vulnerability is important as both faculty members encountered resistance and obstacles to developing critical consciousness among students. Faculty serving as role models to engage with social justice and the discomfort of the topic significantly influences the socialization of a social justice culture in and outside of the classroom (Edwards et al., 2014).

Both participants acknowledge oppressive structures at their universities, colleges, departments, as well as in the process of promotion and tenure. Despite institutional barriers and resistance, Drs. Moore and Smith were strategic about how they navigated these political spaces and relationships to ensure they were in position to teach

such approaches that engaged doctoral students in social justice. For these faculty members, teaching social justice with doctoral students was not solely part of their job, but it provided value that informs their lives and relationships in and outside of the academy.

Although various educational settings (e.g., Student Affairs, K-12 systems) created a shared experience or a reference point for students, the faculty paid less attention to students' career aspirations. Dr. Moore proclaimed, "It's about really having a lifestyle and really helping students get to a place where we're really dismantling structures and not for the come-up." Such a statement illuminates how the faculty used curriculum and pedagogy on social justice to encourage the development of critical being. The relational nature with which the participants approach their teaching echoes what Barnett (2015) wrote about taking students seriously as people. More specifically, the participants provided students with the following, as Barnett (2015) observed:

. . . the space to become themselves, to bring their understanding to bear on situations and, in the process, make them their understanding; to understand themselves in relation to situation requiring insight and learning including their own limitations, and to develop the capacity for critical insight in action. (p. 69)

The development of individual critical consciousness was at the center of how the faculty navigated and implemented teaching on social justice. A focus on individual critical consciousness allows students to move from thinking of themselves as passive actors in society to a having sense of agency for social change.

### Recommendations

#### Educational Programs

The purpose of doctoral education is to engage students in developing skills to analyze and produce knowledge. While engaging in the sort of teaching described by the faculty members in this study, students make the transition from being consumers of knowledge to becoming producers and constructors of knowledge aimed at transforming organizations and communities in which they live and work. Consequently, educational doctoral programs can be spaces where students and faculty can grapple with power, oppression, privilege, and social change.

#### Recommendations for Teaching on Social Justice with Doctoral Students

Faculty are in a sociopolitical position to play an important role in the socialization of doctoral students in

education for social justice, whether as an instructor in the classroom, a chair or advisor in the research process, a dissertation committee member, or a mentor. First, faculty members of all cultures and social identities should engage in self-reflection around oppression, privilege, and their power location as professors. As evident throughout this study, Drs. Moore and Smith constantly engaged in self-reflection as it relates to their teaching, research, service, and personal lives. To teach social justice, faculty must be willing to engage these topics in and outside of classrooms; thus, the engagement with self-reflection might assist in developing the confidence to teach about social justice. Second, doctoral faculty should seek out trainings in and outside of their institution (e.g., teaching & learning centers or professional conferences) to develop knowledge and skills to incorporate a sense of responsibility for exposing students to social justice, engaging and facilitating critical dialogues in various spaces, and developing critical advising and mentoring relationships. Also, through these opportunities, faculty members can connect with others who are committed to such teaching approaches, thus making teaching for social justice more collective rather than individualized in isolation.

As graduate programs consider curriculum and pedagogical strategies with a social justice orientation, there should be close attention paid to learning environments, relationships, and provision of time for students to grapple with their social location and the world around them for social change. For this reason, the last recommendation is that educational doctoral programs may have to rethink program design (e.g., course layout, program duration, advisor assignment) to support teaching and learning about social justice. Thus, teaching on social justice is not solely the faculty's responsibility, but is a shared obligation between students, departments, universities, and communities who unapologetically challenge social oppression and seek justice

### Recommendations for Future Research

Future researchers should consider a longitudinal study of how faculty in doctoral educational preparation programs navigate teaching on social justice. Due to the short time period of the current study, the data was based on the faculty's sense-making and contextualizing in the current time period. A longitudinal study may have the potential to utilize in-depth interviews with faculty and students, document analysis (e.g., reflection journal, teaching philosophy, emails), and observations to allow for a deeper understanding of the nuances of teaching on social justice. With regard to the participants, I would recommend studies including in-depth interviews with doctoral students at various levels within the graduate experience. These interviews would serve to illuminate students' expectations

of teaching and understand how they make sense of teaching on social justice. Lastly, I would recommend future studies focus on faculty social identities (e.g., Black woman) and how these identities influence the ways in which faculty navigate teaching on social justice.

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